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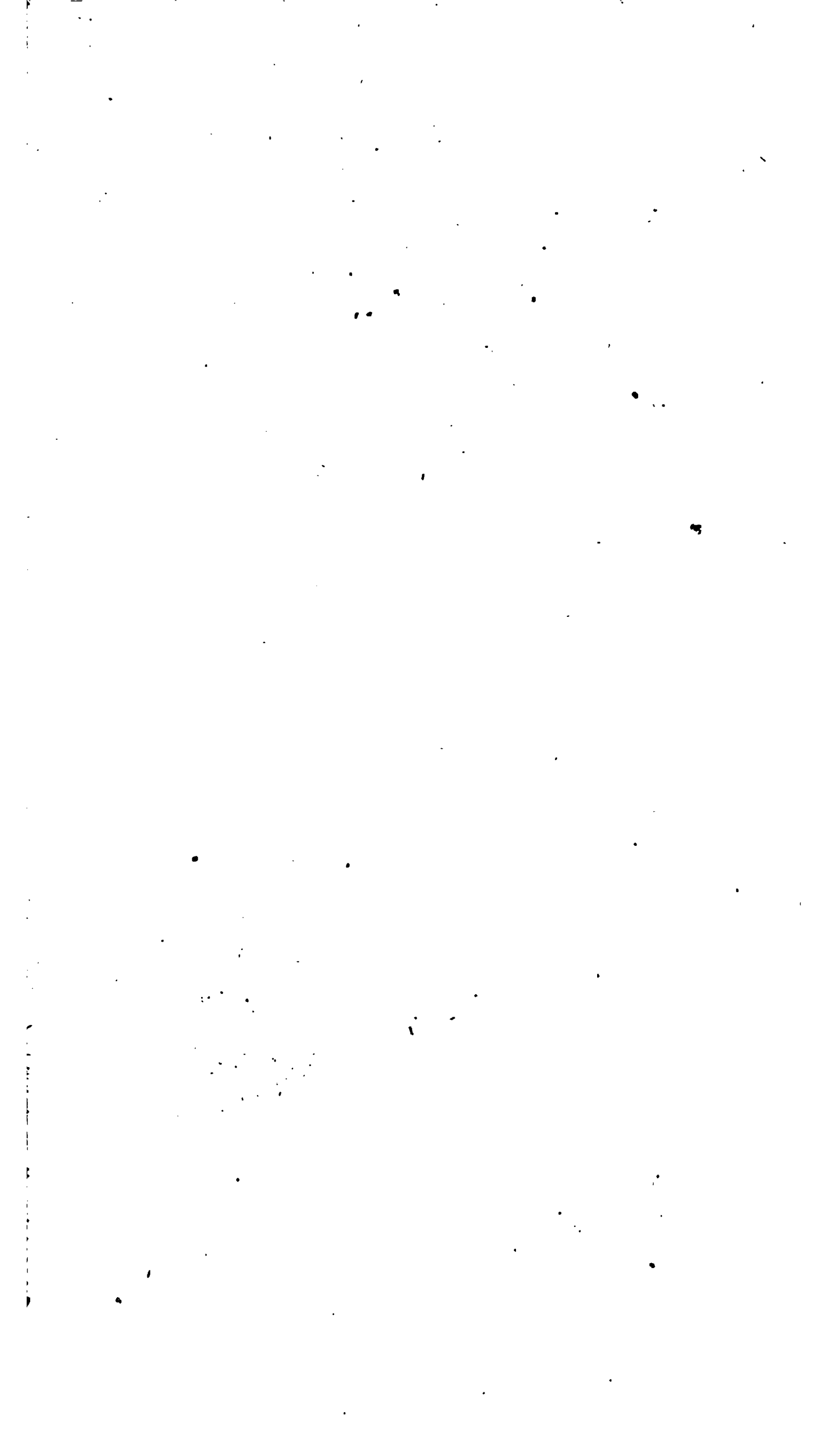
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37.

558.



EXPOSITORY SERMONS

ON THE

PENTATEUCH,

BY

THE REV. W. THISTLETHWAITE, M.A.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BOLTON.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.



SERMON I.

Description of the Tabernacle.

EXODUS xl. 17.

And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. . . . 1

SERMON II.

The Burnt-offering.

LEVIT. i. 4.

And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering: and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. . . . 19

SERMON III.

The Meat-offering.

LEVIT. ii. 1.

And when any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon. . . . 38

SERMON IV.

The Peace-offering.

LEVIT. iii. 1.

And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace-offering,
 if he offer it of the herd ; whether it be a male
 or female, he shall offer it without blemish be-
 fore the Lord. 56

SERMON V.

The Sin-offering.

LEVIT. iv. 3.

If the priest that is anointed do sin according
 to the sin of the people : then let him bring
 for his sin which he hath sinned, a young
 bullock without blemish, unto the Lord, for a
 sin-offering. 74

SERMON VI.

The Trespass-offering.

LEVIT. vi. 6, 7.

And he shall bring his trespass-offering unto the
 Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock,
 with thy estimation, for a trespass-offering
 unto the priest : and the priest shall make an
 atonement for him before the Lord : and it
 shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that
 he hath done in trespassing therein. 93

CONTENTS.

v

SERMON VII.

Consecration of Aaron and his Sons.

LEVIT. viii. 1—3.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin-offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; and gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . . 111

SERMON VIII.

Aaron's entrance on his Office.

LEVIT. ix. 22—24.

And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them; and came down from offering of the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and peace-offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces. . . . 130

SERMON IX.

Nadab and Abihu.

LEVIT. x. 1, 2, 3.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. 148

SERMON X.

The purification of the Leper.

LEVIT. xiii. 45, 46.

And the Leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall his habitation be. 167

SERMON XI.

The Day of Atonement.

LEVIT. xvi. 34.

And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you,
to make an atonement for the children of Israel,
for all their sins, once a year. . . . 185

SERMON XII.

The annual Feasts.

LEVIT. xxiii. 37.

These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall
proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an
offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt-
offering, and a meat-offering, a sacrifice, and
drink-offerings, every thing upon his day. . . 204

SERMON XIII.

The penal code of the Mosaic Law.

LEVIT. xxiv. 14.

Bring forth him that hath cursed without the
camp; and let all that heard him lay their
hands upon his head, and let all the congre-
gation stone him. . . . 222

SERMON XIV.

The Jubilee Year.

LEVIT. xxv. 10.

Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. 240

SERMON XV.

The sanctions of the Mosaic Law.

LEVIT. xxvi. 3, 4.

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. 259

SERMON XVI.

The Law of Jealousies.

NUMBERS v. 29.

This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled. 277

SERMON XVII.

Directions respecting Vows.

NUMBERS vi. 2, 3.

When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord : he shall separate himself from wine, and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, nor dried. . 294

SERMON XVIII.

The Priest's Blessing.

NUMBERS vi. 24, 25, 26.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee : the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. . . . 311

SERMON XIX.

Moses's invitation to Hobab.

NUMBERS x. 29. .

We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good : for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. . . . 328

SERMON XX.

The Israelites desire flesh.

NUMBERS xi. 4.

And the mixt multitude that was among them
 fell a lusting : and the children of Israel also
 wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh
 to eat ? 347

SERMON XXI.

The seventy Elders.

NUMBERS xi. 25.

And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake
 unto him, and took of the spirit that was
 upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders :
 and it came to pass, that when the spirit
 rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not
 cease. 364

SERMON XXII.

The sin of Aaron and Miriam.

NUMBERS xii. 1, 2.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses
 because of the Ethiopian woman whom he
 had married ; for he had married an Ethiopian
 woman. And they said, Hath the Lord in-
 deed spoken only by Moses ? Hath he not
 spoken also by us ? And the Lord heard it ? 381

SERMON XXIII.

The Spies' Report.

NUMBERS XIII. 32, 33.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, the land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. 398

SERMON XXIV.

Caleb.

NUMBERS xiv. 24.

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. 415

SERMON XXV.

The Israelites defeated.

NUMBERS xiv. 41.

And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper. 432

SERMON XXVI.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

NUMBERS xvi. 32.

- And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed
 them up, and their houses, and all the men
 that appertained unto Korah, and all their
 goods. 449

EXPOSITORY SERMONS.

SERMON I.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TABERNACLE.

EXODUS XL. 17.

And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.

THE Jewish ordinances, as I have often before observed to you, were types and shadows of the mercy and grace of the gospel. It is useful for us to know them, not only as matters of scripture history, but as outlines of that perfect dispensation which we now enjoy. The better we understand the several parts of the law and worship appointed to the Jews through Moses, the more clear will be our perceptions of the religion given to us by Jesus Christ.

Having seen, in the last sermon, the liberality of the Israelites in bringing their offerings for the erection of the tabernacle, I propose, in the present sermon, to give a description, first, of its appearance, and secondly, of its furniture.

I. On the first head, namely, the appearance of the tabernacle, let us look, first, at its exterior.

1. The tabernacle was an oblong tent, about eighteen yards long, and about six yards in width and height. It was framed together with twenty boards on each side, each board having two tenons at the bottom, which fitted into two sockets, made in pieces of silver of a hundred pounds weight, placed upon the ground, with bars to strengthen the sides. The west end was formed with eight boards after a similar manner. The east end, which was the entrance, was covered with a very rich curtain, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needle-work. This curtain was supported by five pillars which fell into five sockets of brass. The boards, bars, and pillars, were

all made of shittim wood, which is supposed to be the Acacia, a wood not liable to rot, and overlaid with plates of gold, the rings through which the bars were thrust being also of gold. The roof was a square frame of planks. The whole erection was covered with four different kinds of curtains. The first curtain was made of the finest linen, of the richest colours, woven in a curious manner, and embroidered with figures of cherubim. It was woven in ten breadths, which were firmly fastened together, probably by needlework, in two divisions of five breadths each, and these were attached to each other by loops of blue and buttons of gold, so as to form one curtain when it was thrown over the tent. This first covering of the tabernacle went quite over the top, and hung down on both the sides, to within a yard from the ground. The next covering was of goat's hair, woven in eleven breadths, which were fastened together in two divisions of five and six, and attached to each other, in a similar manner with the others, by loops of blue and buttons of brass. These reached

down to the ground on both sides, and also overhung both the ends, but were doubled or probably festooned up, at the east end. Above this was another covering of ram's skins dyed red, and above all, a covering of badger's skins, so that the whole was completely protected from the weather. The tabernacle was surrounded by a court, about sixty yards long and thirty wide, the inclosure of which was made by pillars, and curtains of net-work. Afterwards, however, when Solomon's temple was erected, that noble structure had three courts surrounding it, the first, or nearest to the temple, being called the Court of the Priests, the second the Court of the Israelites, and the third the Court of the Gentiles.

This then was the Israelites' first place of general worship. Hither the people brought their sacrifices, and here their priests performed the various services of their religion. It continued to be such during all their sojourn in the wilderness, and for four hundred and forty years after their settlement in Canaan, even to the time when Solomon

built his magnificent temple on Mount Zion. It was to be looked upon as the dwelling place of the Lord among them, for to this end was it ordered to be built, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them," and he testified that he dwelt there by the cloud, the symbol of his presence, which "covered" the tent of the congregation."

Before I proceed with any further description of the tabernacle, I will briefly set before you its typical import, considered as the dwelling place of Jehovah.—It is typical of heaven. Thus, in the epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle speaks of our "High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens: a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." And again, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.—It is also typical, in this view, of the human nature of Christ. We know that "in

him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and it seems to be this to which the Apostle refers, also in the Hebrews, when he speaks of "a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this building."—It is moreover typical, as the dwelling place of God, of his true and spiritual church. This is indeed the "habitation of God through the Spirit;" and thus he dwells not only among, but in, his people. "Know ye not," saith St. Paul, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" Thus the tabernacle affords us some views of heavenly and spiritual things, and leads our minds to a devout contemplation of these nobler objects.

2. On the appearance of the tabernacle, I will now proceed, secondly, to a description of its interior.

This was separated into two parts by a large curtain, called the veil, made of the same materials, and ornamented in the same manner, as the first covering of the tent. It divided the tabernacle into two unequal parts. The first part was called the Holy

Place, and was about twelve yards long. In this the priests performed the various functions of their office. The second part was called the Most Holy Place, being about six yards square, into which no one but the high priest was allowed to enter, and he only once in the year. Of both these we read, in the ninth of Hebrews and sixth verse, "The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." And the Apostle proceeds to instruct us in the intention of this exclusion of the priests and people from the inner part of the tabernacle, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." But, blessed be God, *we* are not so excluded. We have all, people and priests together, the fullest access to all the ordinances of God. At the death of Jesus "the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;" and now every believer may draw near to God at any time,

“ having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

II. I go now to the second head of this sermon, and therein to describe to you the *furniture* of the tabernacle.

Beginning with the court we find at its entrance the altar of burnt-offering and its various vessels. This was about two yards and a half or three yards square, and about a yard and a half high. The frame of it was made of shittim wood, hollowed within, and covered over with plates of brass of considerable thickness. Rings were placed upon the sides, and staves of shittim wood, covered with brass fitted into them, by which it was carried. At each corner was a projection, called a horn, also covered with brass, to which the victims to be sacrificed were occasionally bound. In the middle was a grate of brass for the fire, where the sacrifices were burnt, and four rings were attached to it, by which it might at any time be taken out. Various kinds of vessels, all made of brass,

were also in use about it, as fire-pans and shovels, pans to carry away the ashes, basons to receive the blood of the animals sacrificed, and flesh-hooks to place the pieces on the fire, to move them or take them off. The blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled upon this altar, and poured by its side. The bodies of the burnt-offerings, and the greatest part of all the other offerings, except the sin-offerings, were burnt on it, and on it the appointed parts of the daily sacrifices were consumed.

Between the altar and the tabernacle were the laver and its foot. The laver was a large cistern of brass, constantly replenished with water by the Levites, and its foot was a brazen trench, or receptacle round it, by which water was received from the laver by a cock, and where the priests were commanded, on pain of death, to wash themselves, whenever they went into the tabernacle to perform any of their duties there, and whenever they came to the altar to offer sacrifice upon it of any kind. This shews us that pollution with which we are defiled, and that purity with

which we must enter into the presence of God. We need a purification as much as a sacrifice ; and therefore Jesus not only “ purchased the church with his blood,” but he also gave himself for it, “ that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” And hence the Apostle describes those Corinthians who by the power of the word had renounced their sins, “ but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

We enter now into the interior of the tabernacle ; and in the first division of it, or the Holy Place, we have to notice three pieces of furniture, with their respective uses.

1. The Table of Shew-bread. This was made of shittim wood, and overlaid with pure gold. It was about four feet in length, two in breadth, and three in height, with an

ornamental cornice of gold round it. Rings of gold were attached to it, and staves of shittim wood overlaid with gold were prepared for the purpose of carrying it. Various utensils, all of pure gold, belonged to it, as dishes, spoons, covers, and bowls. Upon it were placed twelve loaves, six in a row, called the shew-bread, or bread of faces. These were set on hot every Sabbath, and having remained there through the week, were taken for the use of the priests, to whom alone it was lawful to eat of them. Other bread is provided for us in the gospel. We have the bread of life, that is, that life-giving and life-nourishing doctrine of Christ dying in our human nature to give life to our souls. And of the use of this there is no restriction to any particular class ; though it is the office of the ministers of Christ to set it forth before the people, yet no Christian is excluded from feeding on it ! Oh ! that we may all feed on Christ after a spiritual manner, and find our souls continually strengthened thereby, till we finally eat bread with him in the kingdom of heaven.

2. The next thing to be noticed in the holy place is the golden candlestick. This was made wholly of pure gold, standing on one shaft, with a lamp at the top, and with six branches, three from either side, above one another, and each holding its lamp. It was richly ornamented, and with the tongs and snuff-dishes which belonged to it, weighed in the whole about a hundred pounds weight. The lamps were supplied with the purest oil, and served, as there were no windows in the tabernacle, to give light to the priests, while performing their duties in it. But what light is now vouchsafed to the Church of Christ? Truly the light of divine revelation proceeding from Christ through the inspired writings of his Evangelists and Apostles; hence he is called "the light of the world," "the true light which lighteth every man that is born" into it. A far brighter light will shine in heaven. That glorious place will have no candlestick, will not even need the brightness of the sun itself in it, for the Lord himself will be the light thereof; yea, there will he himself be his church's

everlasting light, and her God will be her glory.

3. Nearer to the veil than either of these stood the altar of incense. This was made of shittim wood covered with plates of gold. It was more than half a yard square, and more than a yard high. It had also a cornice of gold round about it, and four horns at the corners, as the altar of burnt-offering. It had also its rings of gold, and staves of shittim wood covered with gold, for the purpose of carrying it wherever they removed. Sweet incense made after a particular manner, for which express directions were given through Moses, was to be burnt upon it morning and evening, and nothing else, of any kind, was to be offered upon it; except once in the year, when the general atonement was made, the High Priest sprinkled some of the blood of the sin-offering upon its horns to make an atonement upon it. The incense thus offered daily seems to set before us that constant intercession of Christ, which he presents continually in behalf of his people before his Father's throne. That is the

incense which comes with the prayers of the saints before the throne, and obtains them favour.

Our description will now pass through the veil, and entering into the most holy place, will notice what was placed there. There was the *Ark*, commonly called the Ark of the Covenant, or the Ark of Testimony. It was a chest of shittim wood, rather more than four feet long, and nearly a yard in breadth and height. It was plated all over, both without and within, with pure gold, and had a cornice of gold round it. It had also its four golden rings, and its staves of shittim wood overlaid with gold, as the altars of burnt-offering and incense. In it were deposited the tables of the ten commandments ; and before it stood a golden pot containing an omer of Manna, placed there as the Lord had directed Moses, and afterwards the rod of Aaron that budded, with a golden censer, on which the High Priest offered incense on the day of atonement, and which seems to have been left there for the rest of the year. The particular care thus taken for the

preservation of the tables of the Law is well worthy of our notice. They were placed there in testimony of the covenant which Jehovah had entered into with the people that their mutual engagements might be remembered; and no place could afford greater security for their safe keeping. The Law is now preserved in the holy Bible; but its best depository is the believer's heart. St. Paul tells us that it is written there; and David sings, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart." Let it be our care to lay it up in our memories and affections, and while we ever flee to a better covenant to give us life, let us remember that the Law is a transcript of the divine perfections of God, and defines the duty of man.

Upon the Ark was a covering entirely of pure gold called the Mercy-Seat, or otherwise, the Propitiation. Upon this were placed two figures of Cherubim, with expanded wings stretching over it and meeting together, as if for its protection, and with their faces turned downwards towards it, as if in contemplation of the mercy of God, and the

holy contents of the Ark. A bright flame of fire appeared above it, which denoted that Jehovah was present there, and therefore he is said by the Psalmist to “dwell between the cherubims.” Now all this denoted to them that God could be approached only on a mercy-seat ; while we are instructed that we must come to him through the true “propitiation for our sins,” his blessed Son, Jesus Christ.

And thus in this original place of sacrifice and worship, made according to the pattern shewn to Moses in the mount, we see the preparation made for the introduction of that divine sacrifice and that spiritual worship which God afterwards gave to mankind in the gospel. Here are the elements of the Christian faith, for wise purposes obscured and darkly shadowed forth in those ages, but now clearly made known to us by the coming of the Son of God, and the writings of his inspired servants. How high in our estimation, and how dear to our hearts should be that adorable Saviour, who fulfils in his own person all the various offices of these typical

things, who is at once our tabernacle, our burnt-offering, our laver, our candlestick, our shew-bread and altar of incense, our ark, our mercy-seat, our manna, and in short, our all in all. He truly is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the sum and substance of all that the tabernacle and the temple signified to the children of Israel. And he is also “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” While we view him in these long-ago abolished ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, let us feel that he ever was, and ever will be, the only hope of a fallen sinner’s salvation : he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

But if so clear a knowledge of these mysteries of God which were kept hid for ages and generations is now revealed to us, let us take heed that we “receive not this grace of God in vain.” Since the truth is made known to us, let us believe it ; since the light shines upon us, let us walk in it ; since the bread of heaven is come down to us, let us feed upon

18 DESCRIPTION OF THE TABERNACLE.

it; since the laver of regeneration is prepared for us, let us wash in it; since the sacrifice of Christ and his continual intercession are ready for us, let us avail ourselves of them; and since God is seated upon the mercy-seat of the Gospel waiting to receive us, oh! let us “draw nigh to him with the full assurance of faith.” Let us fear, since such glorious privileges are now placed before us, we should any of us fail of becoming actual partakers of them; but let us receive and believe in the Saviour in whom they are placed, and from whom they must be derived; let us manifest our faith by our works, and worship the Lord God in spirit and in truth. So shall we be admitted into Christ’s spiritual church on earth. So shall we have a place in his temple above. And so, when we “put off the earthly house of this our tabernacle, we shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

SERMON II.

THE BURNT-OFFERING.

LEVIT. I. 4.

And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering : and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

IN my last sermon, when describing the tabernacle to you, I spoke of the altar of burnt-offering, which stood in the court that surrounded the tabernacle, and near to the entrance into it. I shall now have to describe to you several of those offerings which were presented to God upon it, and which are set before us in the first seven chapters of this book of Leviticus on which I am now entering. The book is named Leviticus from its describing so many of these offerings, at which it was the peculiar duty of the Levites to officiate. In the present sermon I propose

to consider in the First place, the law respecting the burnt-offering, and the various ceremonies with which it was to be presented ; and, in the Second place, to shew how these shadowed forth the sacrifice of Christ.

1. The burnt-offering, we may observe in the first place, was a voluntary offering. It was not prescribed to the Israelites at any appointed time, or on any particular occasion. It was not a public offering, as were those of the lambs for the daily sacrifice, which I shall consider hereafter, if I be spared to expound the book of Numbers, where the daily sacrifice and other public services are more particularly spoken of. But it was an offering to be brought by any individual, whenever he felt himself so disposed. This offering seems to have been provided for those seasons in the pious Israelite's experience, when he felt his mind under more than ordinary impresssions, when he was sensible of his general sinfulness and deficiencies, and humbly wished to seek mercy for those manifold offences and failings, which were not particularly specified, and had no express offering

appointed for them. This seems to have been the object of it, and hence it is said in the third verse, "he shall offer it of his own voluntary will."

It might be a young bullock from the herd, or a ram or goat from the flocks, or even a turtle dove or young pigeon. The selection was to be made according to the rank and wealth of the offerer: and while these directions denoted that the rich should not offer a mean offering, it assured the poor that their humbler gift would be equally acceptable, and equally efficacious.

Whether it were taken from the herd or the flocks, whether it were bullock, ram, or goat, it was to be perfect in its kind, "a male without blemish." God hereby intimated to them the reverence and respect with which they should regard him, and all his service. It would be highly unbecoming to offer unto him any thing that was lame or blind, or diseased, or in any other way of little worth, and useless. We are hereby shewn what views we should entertain of God, and with what feelings we should make our

offerings to him ; but this command had also a much higher signification, as we shall soon see.

It was also to be offered publicly, and at the appointed place; namely, “ at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord.” The place of sacrifice, as I have before said, was fixed. They might offer nowhere but on the altar before the tabernacle. And they must offer it in the sight of their fellow-worshippers, whereby God was publicly honoured, and their own sense of their need of his mercy openly shewn.

Various were the *ceremonies* to be observed both by the offerer and the priests, which I now proceed to consider.

When the animal, or fowl, as the case might be, was brought to the door of the tabernacle, he who brought it was there to put his hand upon its head. This action was very significant. It was to intimate the offerer's desire that his transgressions might be put upon the animal thus presented, and that the death to which he now devoted it, might be instead of that death which he had

himself most justly deserved. It was intended to be a vicarious sacrifice, the substitution of one thing in the stead of another, and thus emphatically opened the way for one of the principal doctrines of the gospel.

It was then to be killed, as it seems by the offerer himself, though some think that this office was always performed by the Levites: probably the offerer sometimes did it himself, and sometimes the Levites assisted or did it for him. The skin was then stripped off, and the flesh cut in pieces, the inwards and legs being carefully washed with water. If the offering was of a fowl, the priest was himself to kill it, to separate and throw away the crop, and cleave it down the middle, without dividing it asunder.

In all cases the priest was to take the blood, and sprinkle it round about the altar, and this was probably the reason why the priest was even to kill the fowl at the altar, lest the blood, there being so little of it, should not be sprinkled. He was also to prepare the fire upon the altar, and lay the wood upon it, and then to place the pieces of flesh,

or the fowl, upon the wood, and “burn it all on the altar, to be a burnt-sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.”

Thus, it is said, “it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” This was the great purport of the appointment, in hope of this the worshipper brought his offering, through it he sought pardon and reconciliation with God, and when he offered it rightly, it became an atonement for him, not for any value of its own, but by virtue of that great sacrifice, which it prefigured.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to shew you how that sacrifice was shadowed forth by the burnt-offering. For one of my objects, as I have before observed to you, in all these expositions and descriptions of the Jewish law and its ceremonies, is to mark how they represented our great and glorious Redeemer in the various parts of his saving office.

Nothing can be more clear than that the offering now described had special regard to the offering of Christ in a human body. It

is so stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God." Here were the sins of a whole world to be atoned for; here were innumerable transgressions of innumerable persons which needed mercy. The time was come when the cattle upon a thousand hills would be no longer accepted, but the offering of the Son of God was to supersede them all. Then was he slain, slain by the hands of wicked men, not knowing what they did, but unconsciously fulfilling the great purposes of God. Thus Christ was offered, and the *intensity* of his sufferings is not inaptly denoted by that burning of the whole burnt-offering which was so expressly enjoined. He passed through many a fiery trial, the fire of Satan's temptation, the fire of the contradictions, scoffings, and revilings of sinners, the fire of agonizing pain, both in

body and mind, above all the fire of divine wrath and desertion. Oh! how hot was that fire with which he was persecuted by men even unto death, and that especially through which he cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Surely it is also a striking circumstance in the offering of Christ, when we are comparing it with the burnt-offering of the Jews, that it was a *voluntary* offering. We have seen that he said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." To this he went, not merely an unresisting, but a willing victim. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." The intensity of his sufferings was all foreseen; that painful and ignominious death was before his view; yet the free-will burnt-offering was brought by him before the Lord. He felt not indeed his own need of mercy, but he felt the need of a lost and perishing world. O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, he might have said, but in me shall be thy help. And if the blessed Saviour had not thus voluntarily offered

himself, from whence could we have found any thing that could possibly have made an atonement? Lebanon had not been sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof for a burnt-sacrifice.

Is not the excellence and perfection of the offering of Christ strongly impressed upon our minds by the positive injunction that the animal which should be brought as a burnt-offering should be perfect in its kind, “a male without blemish?” Christ was perfect. Consider his human nature. He was born of a pure virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost: he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: his was therefore a sinless and holy sacrifice. But consider his divine nature: here was full perfection. In the human nature there was no taint of sin, in the divine nature there was not a particle of defect. All was complete and perfect in that offering which he presented. Hence, in the language of our communion service, he “made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,

for the sins of the whole world." Such an offering was indispensibly necessary, whether we consider the nature of God who was to be reconciled, or the purity of the law which had been broken, or the magnitude and multitude of the sins for which it was brought. Nothing less than one so spotless and pure, one of such essential dignity and glory, could avail for such a purpose: and when Jesus, the Son of God, offered himself as a burnt-sacrifice, who does not feel that there was not even a possibility of imputing blemish or defect to it?

The laying of the hand on the head of the animal before it was slain is another circumstance which calls for some notice in our application of these ceremonies to Christ. This was evidently done, as I have before stated, as an expression of the offerer's desire that the offences, whatever they might be, for which he brought his offering, might be transferred to it, so that the death of the animal should be accepted in place of that to which he was exposed, and he might be clear. Now there is nothing more plainly

stated in the gospel, than that Christ died as a substitute. He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. This was as expressly foretold by the evangelical prophet as words could express it; “ Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ;” “ he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every man to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The law, and the prophets, and the gospel, all unite in shewing that the offering up of the body of Christ was truly a vicarious sacrifice, and that he was substituted in our stead. Nay the gospel goes further still, telling us, as I have already quoted, that God made him to be “ sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Here is stated a double transfer. Our sins are transferred to him, his righteousness is transferred to us.

The express directions which were given,

and the particular care which the priest was to take that the blood should be sprinkled round about upon the altar, so evidently typifies the blood of Christ that it is scarcely necessary to notice it. Every reader of the New Testament knows how much our salvation is attributed to the blood of Christ. We are justified by his blood; we have redemption through his blood; we are elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus; the blood of Christ purges us from dead works; those who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; God has made him to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; he has purchased the church with his blood; he sanctifies the people with his blood; he washes us from our sins in his own blood. I have quoted these many expressions of the New Testament respecting the blood of Christ to shew you the force of the injunctions which were laid on the priests and the people of Israel respecting the blood of their sacrifices, and that by your seeing more clearly the drift of those injunctions, you may understand that the Lord commanded nothing in vain, but

that all things were looking to that perfect dispensation in which the church would be placed, when the fulness of times should come, and Christ should take away the first covenant with its ceremonies that he might establish the second. The Israelites were thus taught that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins ; and however some of them might have dim and darkened views on this subject, while the veil was upon their mind, we at least know that the blood of all the animals which was shed at the altar of burnt-offering owed all its excellency to its being a type of that blood of Jesus, by which he hath obtained eternal redemption for us.

Let us also look at the purpose for which the burnt-offering was to be brought, in the promise that was attached to it : “ it shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him.” Here is the special office of Christ. His sacrifice was truly an atoning sacrifice. He offered it that he might pacify the just anger of God, and procure a reconciliation with him for sinful man. Atonement means

reconciliation, and how clearly is this stated by St. Paul as having been effected for us by the sacrifice of Christ. He says, “ You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked words, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight.” And as in the case of the laying of our sins upon Christ, the gospel goes beyond the law, and shews that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, even to all that believe, so the gospel *here also* goes beyond the law, and shews not only that God becomes reconciled to man by the death of his Son, but that through the powerful influence of that death upon his heart, man becomes reconciled to God. As the same Apostle already quoted writes again in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, “ All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Whoever

shall bring that sacrifice of Christ in faith to the altar of God shall assuredly find that it shall be accepted for him, and shall make an atonement for him. It will appease the wrath of God, who will no longer impute his trespasses to him ; and it will have the happy effect upon his own heart of removing all its natural alienation and enmity, so that he shall be reconciled to God.

I trust that you all feel perfectly assured that it is only through the efficacy and merit of this one great sacrifice of Christ, that we can possibly be accepted of God. Since this is so clearly presented to us in all parts of the scriptures, I hope that all of you will see that there is no other possible way by which we can obtain peace and mercy. If, by these expositions of the object and intention of the ceremonies of the Jews' religion, I can produce a deeper conviction and clearer perception of this principal truth of the gospel, then our time will have been well employed. See then how the death of Christ and his severe sufferings, his voluntary gift of himself for our salvation, the efficacy of his

blood, the perfection of his sacrifice, his substitution in our stead, and the atonement which he has made for us, are all here depicted. I say not what complaint might be made of the Jews, if they did not see through the meaning of these types and shadows, but I say that we are all perfectly inexcusable, if we do not understand this merciful undertaking of Christ, and our own absolute need of his salvation. I say also, that we are all perfectly inexcusable, if, understanding this, we do not apply our faith to it, and bring this sacrifice, this divine burnt-offering, this great atonement, before the Lord. Let us all bring it, I say, by faith before God against whom we have sinned; let us by faith lay our hands upon it; let us by faith sprinkle the blood of it upon our souls, and let us bring it most willingly, gladly, and thankfully: most willingly, as being satisfied with it, and without going about to seek any offering of our own, or to establish our own righteousness in any other way; most gladly, as feeling how perfectly sufficient it is for our purpose, and in what a blessed and glorious

state of peace and reconciliation it will place us ; and most thankfully, as being deeply affected by the infinite love and mercy of Christ in thus giving himself for us.

But although we have nothing of our own which we can offer as an atonement, yet there are things which may be presented to God, voluntarily on our part, as tokens of our regard to him, and out of gratitude for his mercies. We may give to him of our substance for the advancement of any work of piety, or for the relief of the poor. And whatever we thus give should be a willing offering, as were the gifts of the people for the erection of the tabernacle ; and whether it be large or small should depend upon the possessions of the giver. The pigeon or turtle dove was as suitable for the burnt-offering of the poor, as the bullock for that of the rich ; but the rich might not have ventured to bring that smaller offering. Therefore in all gifts for pious or charitable uses let the means of the giver be considered, and give in proportion as God has given unto you.

But there is something more which we all may give whether we be rich or poor, which all are required to give, and which is the best offering that we can possibly present. This is, ourselves, our hearts and lives, our affections and services. We should all give ourselves to him, who gave himself for us. The Apostle says in the twelfth chapter of Romans, and first verse, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." He describes the character of true Christians in the fourteenth chapter of the same Epistle, and the seventh verse, where he says, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth unto himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Again he writes in the fifth chapter of his second Epistle to the Corinthians, and the fourteenth verse, "The

love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” How forcible are these scriptures ! Oh ! that they may come with such a power to all our hearts, as may make us to devote ourselves willingly to Christ and his service ! Oh ! that the love of Christ may constrain us also to judge as the Apostle judged, to live as the Apostle lived, and to present ourselves a living sacrifice unto God, as he beseeches us to do !

SERMON III.

THE MEAT-OFFERING.

LEVIT. II. 1.

And when any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon.

ALL of you, who read your bibles, are aware how many and various were the offerings which the Jews were commanded to present unto the Lord. It was thus that he was served by his ancient church, and it was thus that he instructed them in the rudiments of the gospel. I trust that you will be improved in scriptural knowledge by my endeavours to expound and illustrate these various ceremonies; and when I say *scriptural knowledge*, I mean the knowledge of the *whole* scriptures, for so intimate is the connection between the

Old Testament and the New, that whatever throws light upon any part of the one tends to clear up and confirm the other. With this view I have already considered the burnt-offering, and I now proceed to the meat-offering with its attendant ceremonies.

This offering was to consist of fine flour with oil poured upon it, and frankincense added to it. The use of leaven and of honey were expressly prohibited. We find that the leaven was uniformly excluded from every offering, of which any part was to be burnt on the altar of God, though it might be used in such as were merely oblations to the priests: the reason of this will appear when we come to consider its spiritual import. Honey was prohibited, either on account of its tendency, like leaven, to ferment, or because it was much used by the heathen in their sacrifices, or as being representative of the sweets of sensual indulgencies. Salt on the contrary was expressly enjoined, “every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy

meat-offering : with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." The reason appears from the terms by which it is spoken of, it is called the salt of the covenant. Anciently compacts of friendship or alliance were formed by the eating of salt together, which thus became, as it were, the seal of the covenant. Moreover salt was considered as an emblem of perpetuity, from its known quality of preserving meat, and thus served to denote the unchangeableness of that mercy and favour which formed the covenant on the part of God, and of that love and obedience which is due from man.

With these ingredients the offering might be presented without any preparation, or it might be baked in such manner as the offerer pleased. A part of it, with all the frankincense, was to be taken by the priest to the altar, and burnt upon it, as "an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." This part of the meat-offering was denominated the *memorial* of it. It was thus named, I suppose; that the Israelites might be put in mind that the whole was a

sacred offering, though only a part was expressly offered to God, and that even the remainder, though given to the priests, was to be considered as given to him; or the intention of its being thus named might be that God might be thus put in mind of his covenant. The remainder of the meat-offering was the portion of the priests, and constituted a part of those means by which God provided for their subsistence, and from which it is said that they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar. Sometimes the meat-offering instead of being made of fine flour, consisted of the first fruits of the corn. In this case the ears were to be taken when full but yet green, to be parched before the fire, the corn to be beaten out, and offered with oil and frankincense and salt as the former. Thus I have given you some account of the law of the meat-offering and its ceremonies: and I now proceed to set before you such spiritual instruction as I think may be derived from it.

The meat-offering, as being composed of the fruits of the earth, may be looked upon as a thankful acknowledgement of God's

providence. And we, and all his creatures, as well as the nation of the Jews, have abundant cause to honour God, who maketh the corn to grow for the use of man, and blesses the fields with fertility for our subsistence and comfort. We may well be thankful for the gift, and honour the giver. And we may learn to shew our sense of these bounties which he bestows upon us, and our thankfulness for them, by consecrating a portion of them as a memorial of his goodness. We are not now to offer them up by fire, but there are still those who are appointed by him as receivers of his people's acknowledgements. The ministers of his word still claim their support. It is the rule of the gospel deduced from these offerings of the ancient church, as the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Moreover, the Lord hath other receivers of

his people's offerings, the poor, who for that purpose shall never cease out of the land; and whom, like his priests, ye have always with you. And all such gifts are termed sacrifices by the Apostle, who says, "To do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." But oh! that the Lord's ministers, and his poor, yea, and those who are offerers too, may all know that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," and desire and obtain "meat to eat which the world knows not of." And again, though ministers and poor have a scriptural claim upon the offerings of the Lord's people for their support, yet neither should be craving, or expecting; both should learn to be content with what is done for them, and thankful for all that is received. If we, the ministers of Christ, or you, the poor, claim these things as our right, and murmur about the want of them, we are no better in our spirit and conduct than those who think that the labourer is not worthy of his hire, or those who withhold

more than is meet, or those who would suffer a fellow-creature to perish. Take heed and beware of all such feelings ; a “man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.”

As the meat-offering was to be made of the finest of the flour, I may hence again take occasion to observe, that all that we offer to God should be the best of its kind ; and this observation applies more particularly to the various endowments which God has bestowed upon us. Almost all persons have some thing for which they are more or less distinguished above those around them. Some have rank and influence, some have wealth, some have learning, some have fluency of speech, some have great amiability of temper, some peculiar powers of pleasing. Oh ! that all would employ the talent which they possess for the glory of God, and consecrate that fine flour to his service, not studying to be admired or envied for it, but to render it useful.

The meat-offering of the corn taken from the green ears may instruct us, not only to

give our best, but our *earliest* services to the Lord. How happy would it be if our young people felt this truth! How happy for us their ministers, their parents, and friends, but above all how happy for themselves! Oh! that by any recommendations or persuasions we could induce you to lay your first ripe fruits upon the altar of God, as a memorial of your love and gratitude to him, and of your humble earnest desire to be members of his covenant. Oh! that the principles of true piety and devotedness to God might mark your early years, and give earnest of a glorious harvest of faith and holiness as you advance in life. Remember, my young friends, that God has given you, immediately from himself, those souls which are within you, those immortal souls which will now from henceforth be capable of the most exquisite feeling of happiness and misery, which never more can cease to be, never can lose the consciousness of their existence, or of the manner in which they have felt and acted during their time of probation in union with the body. Oh! give to his service and

glory those most precious parts of all that he has bestowed upon you ; and be assured that however early this spiritual offering be made, you will never regret having remembered your Creator in the days of your youth: but when “ the years draw nigh, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them,” when old age and all its infirmities oppress you, when the enjoyments of sense shall cease and the energies of the mind are broken, when the dust is about to “ return to the earth as it was and the spirit unto God who gave it,” then your richest consolation will spring from the communion which you can hold with God ; then it will be a wonderful comfort, if you can look back and say with Obadiah, “ I have feared the Lord from my youth.” Thus indeed you will come to your end “ as a shock of corn in his season,” and be gathered by the heavenly reaper’s hand, ripe, fully ripe, for the enjoyment of the eternal Father’s love.

The oil which was poured upon the flour or the corn intimates to us that every offering which we offer should have that anointing of

the holy one of which St. John speaks so largely in his first Epistle. That oil of divine grace, that principle of holiness, which the Spirit of the Lord pours out upon the true believer's heart, is indispensable to the acceptance of our offerings. Our hearts must be under the influence of gracious dispositions and emotions: the Spirit must be poured out upon us, producing love, gratitude, reverence, with all the other pious, devotional, and religious feelings, or else, "though we offer him burnt-offerings and meat-offerings, he will not accept them." In the very best frame in which we can offer neither ourselves nor our services can deserve his acceptance. This is given wholly to the merit of the great sacrifice of Christ. But that gracious work of the Spirit of God is equally necessary. We must be sanctified by the Spirit, as well as justified by Christ.

As the whole gospel assures us that there can be no salvation in the absence of either the work of Christ or the grace of the Spirit, so the necessity of both seems to be plainly intimated by the union of both oil and

frankincense in the meat-offering of the Jews. For, as I stated in my description of the tabernacle, I take the frankincense to represent that divine intercession of Christ, by which he perfumes, and renders of a sweet smell, all the prayers, praises, good works, and holy affections, of his servants. That the frankincense is applicable only to Christ is evident from its being *wholly* consumed by fire. No part of *his* work is borne by any but himself; nothing renders our services acceptable but his atoning, justifying, interceding grace. Yet when all desert of our own works is renounced, when we attribute all the favour and acceptance with which we meet to the merit and mediation of Christ, then our services for his honour and glory, our oblations to his priests or poor, our works of beneficence and kindness of any kind for his sake, are “spiritual services, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Paul who says in his Epistle to the Ephesians, that “Christ hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour,” says also

in the Epistle to the Philippians, who had kindly ministered to his necessities, I have “received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” I say then on the whole, that when the heart is under the gracious influences of the Spirit of God, as represented by the oil on the meat-offering, and when the whole honour of acceptance is ascribed to Christ, and we glory in nothing but his cross and intercession, as we learn from the frankincense, then even a cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, is an offering with which God is well pleased, and all our services, thus performed and thus regarded by us, will go up, as the prayers and alms of Cornelius, for a memorial before God, like that of the meat-offering, of which he will not be unmindful.

Something of the same kind is intimated to us by the prohibition of the use of leaven and honey. Leaven is a well-known emblem of pride and hypocrisy. These swell the heart

your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." This spirituality of mind should be carried into our conversation with others, into our public prayers and worship of God, and into all our more private devotions: else they will all be insipid and tasteless, a mere dull and heartless formality. Christians are to look upon themselves as "the salt of the earth," but alas from the useless and frivolous discourse of many, from their cold and uninterested feelings, from their dulness and apathy in divine things, may it not be said of them that "the salt hath lost its savour," and is good for nothing?" Yet as the term stands in its present connection it is intended no doubt to represent the covenant, into which God has been pleased to enter with his church through his beloved Son. His covenant of salt is an expression of scripture which denotes at once that his covenant is a covenant of peace and an everlasting covenant. And oh! what sweet, and constant, and abiding peace may we find in it! And what a refuge may we gain in it from all the disappointments and sorrows which fall so heavily

on many of us ! Happy indeed shall we be, if we can truly say as David, “ Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure : this is all my salvation and all my desire.” And while we strengthen and comfort our hearts with the thought of these “ sure mercies of David,” let us think also that it must be perpetual on our part. When we bring our offerings to our God, we should say in our hearts, with the pious feeling of the prophet Jeremiah, “ come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.”

Thus I have endeavoured to explain to you another of those interesting ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, and to shew you how it also contained several of the principal doctrines of the gospel. I must repeat it that my great object in these expositions is to make those doctrines appear to you still more weighty and important, as having been thus prefigured, and taught, though in the comparative obscurity of type and shadow, so

many ages ago. That we may receive the gospel heartily, and obey it faithfully, and depend upon it wholly, we must see its importance and how indispensable it is for our salvation. And surely we shall see this in a still stronger light, when we find that it has been “the power of God and the wisdom of God” through all ages of the church, yea even from eternity, that it was formed in the divine mind and counsels for the recovery of fallen man even before his fall, that preparation was making for its introduction for four thousand years, and that it has now been nearly two thousand years revealed to mankind. It is called “the glorious gospel of the blessed God :” it is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” God grant you a true and living, a sure and stedfast faith in all its sublime and sanctifying truths, that it may be such to you.

My beloved brethren and dearest friends, I know not how to part with you while I am upon this, to me at least, all engrossing subject. Oh ! if you knew what a blessing to my own soul is the hope begotten in it by

that “glorious gospel,” what peace in trouble, and joy in sorrow, and tranquillity in sickness, are produced in me by it, what pleasure I have in setting forth, with all affection and love, its blessed truths to you, oh! you would think that I might well ask you, as David did his brethren, “Is there not a cause?” Is there not a cause why I should be importunate with you, why repetition should recur after repetition, and I should detain you, often and often, on this one subject, “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” or on that which is in fact the same, nay which is still more interesting, which puts all its efficacy and value into the gospel itself, I mean, the person and offices of the glorious Son of the blessed God, even the blessed Jesus himself. Oh! think me not troublesome, but believe that the whole arises from ministerial anxiety for the peace of your minds and the eternal safety of your souls. And oh! receive, in simple faith and love, that gospel and that Saviour who are preached to you.

SERMON IV.

THE PEACE-OFFERING.

LEVIT. III. 1.

And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace-offering, if he offer it of the herd ; whether it be male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord.

CONTINUING our enquiries into the nature and intention of the various ceremonies of the Old Testament, we come now to the peace-offering. And here again I wish us to bear this point always in mind that every sacrifice had some peculiar reference to Christ, and shadowed forth the method of acceptance through him, or the privileges or duties of those who partake of his grace. Our enquiries therefore are not after matters of ancient date, which are become obsolete and altogether useless, but we have to examine into

subjects which are as full of instruction both on doctrinal and practical subjects with which ourselves are immediately concerned, as they are interesting for their antiquity. In explaining the ceremony of the peace-offering, I shall begin, as I have done in the case of the preceding ceremonies, with stating the law concerning it.

I. There were some particular occasions on which peace-offerings were ordered to be offered; but in general these were voluntary offerings presented in consequence of some vow, or in acknowledgment of some mercy, as we find by reference to the seventh chapter of this book,* where they are more fully described. The sacrifice was an animal, which might be taken from the herd, or from the flocks, and which might also be either male or female, but which must be without blemish, as in all such cases. The animal was to be killed, the hand of the offerer to be laid upon its head, the blood was to be sprinkled by the priest about the altar precisely as in the case of the burnt-offering. Along with the animal, “ unleavened cakes mingled

with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried," were to be offered. And besides the cakes of unleavened bread, there was to be brought leavened bread also, because, since this sacrifice partook, as we shall see, more of the nature of a social meal than any of the others, therefore the bread which they generally used at their common meals was also to be presented. For, whereas when a burnt-offering was offered the whole was consumed by fire unto the Lord, and when a meat-offering was offered part was burnt as a memorial unto the Lord and the rest belonged to the priest, in the peace-offering there was a further division, and the offerer himself received by much the greatest share.

The division was made thus. One part was to be the Lord's. All the inward fat of the animal, with the kidneys, and the caul over the liver, was to be entirely consumed by fire upon the altar. And this was a standing ordinance to the Israelites, as we read in the seventeenth verse, "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout

all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood." It was the inward fat or suet only that was thus prohibited; and it is to be observed that the prohibition extended not only to this part of the fat and the blood of such animals as were offered in sacrifice, but also of those which they killed for their common food. "The fat is the Lord's," it is said, probably to intimate that the best and richest is his due; while the reason for the prohibition of blood is expressly assigned (in Levit. xvii. 11) in these words, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Here is a powerful reason for making such a difference between the blood and the flesh of the animals sacrificed: to the blood, as making an atonement for the soul, and therein typical of the blood of Christ; to the blood, as especially containing the life, and therein typifying that life of Christ which he surrendered upon the cross to redeem the soul from death, a peculiar sacredness was attached, that mankind,

in after ages, might the more easily be led to see the infinite importance of this fundamental doctrine of the gospel, that the life of the human body assumed by the Son of God, and offered up upon the cross, is the sole medium of peace and reconciliation with an offended God. This was the great lesson to be taught by the strict injunction that in no case whatever should they eat the blood, but they should always pour it on the earth as water. The object of the prohibition being now accomplished, and blood being no longer offered as a typical atonement, there need be no doubt about eating the blood, as some Christians are scrupulous to do. These then were the parts of the peace-offering which were the Lord's, the fat and the blood.

Another portion was assigned to the priest. This consisted of the breast and the right shoulder. The breast was to be waved to and fro, and the shoulder was to be heaved upwards before the Lord, in token of their being appropriated to his honour and service, and the breast was given to the priests in general, while the shoulder remained the perquisite of

him who officiated. The following are the words of the law; (vii. 29-36.) "He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace-offerings unto the Lord, shall bring his oblation unto the Lord of the sacrifice of his peace-offerings. His own hands shall bring the offerings of the Lord made by fire; the fat with the breast, it shall he bring, that the breast may be waved for a wave-offering before the Lord. And the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar: but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons. And the right shoulder shall ye give unto the priest for a heave-offering, of the sacrifices of your peace-offerings. He among the sons of Aaron that offereth the blood of the peace-offerings and the fat, shall have the right shoulder for his part. For the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel, from off the sacrifices of their peace-offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest, and unto his sons, by a statute for ever, from among the children of Israel. This is the portion of the anointing of Aaron, and of the anointing of his sons, out of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, in the day

when he presented them to minister unto the Lord in the priest's office ; which the Lord commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that he anointed them, by a statute for ever, throughout their generations." In like manner a portion of the leavened bread was to be given to the priest. "Of it," it is written, (vii. 14) "he shall offer one"—that is one loaf or cake, "out of the whole oblation, for a heave-offering unto the Lord, and it shall be the priest's that sprinkleth the blood of the peace-offerings."

All the rest, except what was thus consumed by fire, or given to the priest, belonged to the offerer himself, and was to be eaten by him with his friends as a social and hospitable meal. If the peace-offering was for a thanksgiving, it was to be eaten the same day that it was offered, and none of it was to be left until the morning. But if the sacrifice of the offering was a vow or a voluntary offering, part of it might be eaten on the day on which it was offered, and part of it on the next day ; but if any of it remained unto the third day,

that part must not be eaten, but must be burnt with fire.

II. Such were the ceremonies and injunctions belonging to the sacrifice of the peace-offering, and now let us consider, in the second place, the use which such an appointment might be to the Jew, and what it would teach him.

It would teach him the necessity of seeking peace with God, and give him a strong insight into the manner in which it must be obtained.

As the peace-offering was a transaction not between one individual, family, tribe, or nation, and another, but between the offerer and God, it would shew him how necessary it was that man should be at peace with his maker. It would necessarily lead him to desire the friendship of God above every other alliance, and dispose him to lay aside all his own enmity and disobedience. It would necessarily have a very favourable influence upon his feelings, and tend to produce in him every emotion of gratitude and love. It would bring something of the spirit

of a son, or at least of a friend, into his heart.—It would give him moreover a great insight into the manner in which peace was to be obtained. For while he was required to bring the animal, and shed its blood before the altar, he would see that he might not look for peace with God, except through the death of another, and through the efficacy of blood which made an atonement for him. No doubt the generality of them would have but dim apprehensions of these great truths which *we* know to have been thus represented, but the pious among them could not but perceive the way in which they must come to God; they could not but see the necessity of a previous propitiation.

Again, the ceremony of the peace-offering would teach the Jew the blessed privileges which he enjoyed through his sacrifice. He would greatly rejoice that he was admitted to such a state of communion with God. Partaking of the same viands was ever considered as the bond and proof of friendship and peace; and here the Lord, his priests, and the offerer himself, all partook of the

same offerings. They sat down together, as it were, at the same table. This ceremony therefore would give the Jew a happy assurance of the favour of the Lord towards him. As he feasted with his family and friends on the portion assigned him from the altar, he would enjoy a peace in his soul from this instituted token of reconciliation and friendship. The whole ceremony was eminently calculated to produce all proper affections. As he brought his offering to the altar he would think of the great mercy and condescension of God in thus providing a way of peace for him, and admitting him to his own friendship and love, and admire the privilege thus bestowed upon him of drawing so nigh unto the Lord. He would feel deep humiliation for every proof of alienation and disaffection which appeared in his own heart. As he laid his hand on the animal's head, and as he saw its blood streaming at his feet, he would think of his own utter unworthiness to appear before God, and he would think that he owed all his permission to approach him to the sufferings of another in his stead. As

he saw the smoke of the fat ascend to heaven, he would rejoice in this acceptance of his offering. When he looked upon the waved breast, and the uplifted shoulder, he would be thankful for the ministry of the appointed servants of the Lord. And when he retired from the ceremony, he would go on his way rejoicing that the Lord had accepted him in his work, and would eat his food with all the warmest emotions of gratitude, affiance, and love. Such I think would be the influence of a ceremony of this nature upon the heart of every pious Jew. It would be one of his most highly privileged feasts, though but a private one, and would throw a peaceful and happy frame over the whole soul. Thus the evangelical doctrines were presented to him, and all those right feelings towards God, which are so powerfully called forth by the gospel, were, at least in a measure according with his light, experienced by the Jew.

III. But now, in the third place, I proceed to enquire into the instruction which *we* may derive from this ceremony of the peace-offering.

Surely it may lead us to see a necessity that we too should seek peace with God. For the nature of man is ever the same, and the circumstances also in which he is placed by nature are universally the same. By nature we are transgressors of the law of God, and by nature we are alienated in our minds and enemies to him by wicked works; and consequently are in circumstances of condemnation and wrath. In these circumstances it is indispensable for our safety that we obtain peace. Never had a nation, which had no resources whatever sufficient to contend against the power of another, but was existing wholly by the forbearance of that other, such motives to seek peace with its more powerful adversary, as we have to seek peace with God. Never had the traitorous and openly rebellious subjects of any earthly prince such necessity to seek peace with their justly offended sovereign, when all their attempts against his throne had failed, and their case was desperately hopeless, as we have to deprecate the vengeance of our offended God, and to desire reconciliation with him.

And how plainly is the method of peace revealed to us ! It is procured for us through the instrumentality of another, whom we well know to be the blessed and eternal Jesus himself. “ He is our peace.” “ God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” This then is the peace-offering which *we* must bring. Upon *his* head we lay *our* hands. We present him, the only begotten and beloved Son of God, as one in whom the father is well-pleased, and who will appease his wrath. And oh ! the blessing which we derive when that offering is accepted for us. Then passes away all that condemnation to which we were previously exposed, all that justly aroused wrath of God which our rebellion had provoked. Then also pass away all that hatred and enmity which naturally subsist in the unreconciled heart of man ; so far from continuing a hater of God, he is no longer even a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, but “ the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given to him,” and that casteth out fear, and hatred, and every other unworthy feeling towards God.

Oh! how great are the privileges which then the soul enjoys! Many of them are enumerated by the Apostle in the beginning of the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." What blessed concomitants are these of that peace which he enjoys through our Lord Jesus Christ who is justified by faith: present joy in God, the power of ever glorying in tribulations and afflictions, love shed abroad on the heart by the Holy Ghost himself, access into the grace and liberty of the gospel, with the hope of

the future enjoyment of the glory of God. These are the blessings enjoyed in this state of peace. Well is it called, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Well may it be said to be such as the world cannot give. Well might Jesus say, "peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: *not as the world giveth*, give I unto you." What a rich spiritual feast is here! Here are provisions sent us from the Lord which do indeed nourish and strengthen our souls, and invigorate them for every holy service and duty. Here is what will not only cause us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but will also preserve us in the allegiance to which we have now returned, and prevent us from going back again to our rebellion and sin. Prophets and Apostles assign such effects to these delightful emotions of the heart. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." The immense value of the blessing of spiritual peace very strongly appears from its being made the

principal blessing pronounced by Aaron and his sons under the Old Testament dispensation as we find, (Numbers vi. 23,) “ Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee : the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee *peace*.” Its value appears also from the form of the apostolic salutations and benedictions, which run almost uniformly in these terms, “ Grace be unto you, and *peace* from God our father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” The ministers of God in every age have no better blessing to give, or happier tidings to announce. “ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth *peace*,” sung the prophet Isaiah. “ Glory to God in the highest, and in earth *peace*, good will towards men,” sung a host of heavenly angels when the birth of Jesus was announced.

How grateful should we be to him who has

procured us this blessing ! It is said even of men that “ Blessed are the peace-makers.” And if a blessing is on him who only reconciles two fellow-creatures to each other, how very blessed must he be who reconciles God and man ! Who could have done this but he who was both God and man ? This was the “ daysman between us, who laid his hand upon both.” This was he who stood in the way between the opposed parties, and died, yes even died himself, that they might again be one, died that we might not be utterly consumed. Oh ! that wondrous act, which has so powerful an influence. Neither party, if we may venture so to speak, could withstand it. God was moved by it to cast aside his great indignation : man is moved by it to cast away all the arms of his rebellion. It melts God to pity, and man to penitence. It makes God ready to pardon, and man ready to desire pardon. It inclines God to hear, and man to pray. It makes God to hold out his hand with the offer of peace, and man to fall on his knees and sue for it.

“ But there is no peace,” saith my God,

“to the wicked.” This is strongly intimated in the law of the peace-offering, (vii. 20, 21,) which forbade any one that was unclean to eat of it. My brethren, I pray you to remember that every soul of man, who lives wickedly, and continues in wickedness impenitently, and dies therein, never can have peace. He can have no peace with God while he lives; and hereafter he can have nothing but weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth eternally. O ye, who are living in sin, depart from iniquity, and cast away all your transgressions. Humble yourselves penitently before the God who is merciful to the penitent. Cast yourselves upon the offering of his son Jesus, for he justifies those who believe in him. Seek peace through *his* death that you may experience peace of conscience now, and hereafter enjoy peace, happiness, and glory with God in his kingdom of heaven.

SERMON V.
THE SIN-OFFERING.

LEVIT. IV. 3.

If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people : then let him bring for his sin which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish, unto the Lord, for a sin-offering.

THE essential doctrines of divine truth are enforced upon us by every view which we take of any part of the Mosaic law, and particularly the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man. The holiness of God is especially presented to us by the ceremony which we have now to consider, called the sin-offering. For it intimates that the holiness of God is such that it cannot tolerate sin however small. Let sin be committed in any way, and there must be a sacrifice to atone

for it. Hence in the ceremonial law an offering was required even when the sin committed was done in ignorance. In this view the ceremony which we have now to consider is full of importance. For many may be ready to think that an offence committed unintentionally or unknowingly cannot incur the charge of guilt. But the law of God determines otherwise. It expressly declares that if any commit a sin through ignorance, they are guilty : it expressly provides that a sacrifice shall be presented to make an atonement for them. The sin, it is true, is not so great as if it were done knowingly, wilfully, and presumptuously ; yet still it is sin. In that dreadful sin of the Jews, when they “ killed the prince of life,” St. Peter, extenuating it as far as he could, says, “ And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers,” yet he adds, “ Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” St. Paul knew in his own case that when he was a persecutor of the church of Christ he “ did it ignorantly through unbelief,” and that “ for

that cause he obtained mercy," yet he considered himself as "the chief of sinners." This truth is directly taught us by the ceremony which now in its turn comes before us ; and I pray God that the consideration of it may tend to impress us all with a deeper sense of the evil of sin.

The sin-offering was expressly appointed for those cases in which any one had sinned through ignorance ; that is, without having sufficient knowledge of the law of God respecting that particular point, whatever it might be, or without being aware of the consequence of his own action. Sin was nevertheless contracted, and an atonement must be made, that the offender might find mercy. Now there was a considerable difference made in the value of the sacrifice to be offered, according to the station of the transgressor. A *priest* might fall into a sin of this kind ; and he was required, in such case, to bring the greatest sacrifice, because he was least excusable of all men if he knew not the law of God, or did any thing contrary to it incautiously ; he must offer for his sin-offering

“ a young bullock without blemish.” He must bring it to the door of the tabernacle, he must lay his hand upon its head, and kill it before the Lord : some of its blood must be sprinkled seven times before the veil of the sanctuary, some of it must be put upon the horns of the altar of incense which was within the tabernacle, and all the rest must be poured at the foot of the altar of burnt-offering. Then the inward fat, as in the ceremony of the peace-offering, must be burnt upon the altar, but the skin, and all the remaining parts of the bullock were to be carried without the camp, and there to be wholly consumed with fire.—The *whole congregation* might sin through some ignorance or misconception of the law, and not in wilful transgression, or contempt of it. In this case the offering was the same, “ a young bullock without blemish ;” *the elders of the congregation* were to lay *their* hands upon its head, and the same ceremonies were to be used in the disposal of the blood and the body, as in the sin-offering of the priest.—When a *ruler* had thus sinned, and his sin

afterwards came to his knowledge, *he* was to bring “a kid of the goats, a male without blemish.”—If one of the *common people* sinned, *he* was to bring a kid of the goats or a lamb, a *female* without blemish. As before, they were to put their hands on the head of their offering, and to kill it. But the blood of the offerings in these last two cases was not to be sprinkled before the veil, nor was it to be put upon the horns of the golden altar of incense, but upon the horns of the brazen altar of burnt-offering, which stood in the court without the tabernacle, and the rest poured out at the bottom of it. Moreover, of these offerings of the rulers and the common people, the whole carcase, except those parts which were burnt unto the Lord, were to be given to the priests, and were to be eaten by them in the court of the tabernacle. But none might in any way touch the flesh but such as were clean, that is, without any ceremonial defilement; if any of the blood should be sprinkled upon any of the garments it must be carefully washed out; if the flesh was sodden in an

earthen vessel, that vessel being porous, and imbibing some of it, must be broken, and if it was sodden in a brazen vessel, that must be scoured and rinsed with water. These minute directions were to teach them, that even after the atonement was made, sin must not be permitted to cleave to them in the smallest degree. The sprinkling of the blood on the golden altar *within* the tabernacle and the burning of the *whole* animal in the case of a sin-offering for a priest or the congregation, while in the other cases the blood was sprinkled on the brazen altar *without* the tabernacle, and part of the animal was given to the priests, shews that in the former cases the sin against the Lord was more heinous, and also that in every thing that relates to his holiness there must be kept up a studious regard to a suitable connection in all its parts. The law is explicitly laid down in the last verse of the sixth chapter. “No sin-offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten, it shall be burnt in the fire.”

In proceeding now to make some reflections upon this subject, let me again remind you from it of the infinite holiness of God. He is so opposed to sin, that even the slightest degree of it incurs his wrath, and would eternally ruin our souls without an atonement. He sees sin in things in which we do not perceive it; nay, even the very "heavens are not clean in his sight, and he charges his angels with folly." How circumspect should we therefore be! How careful to examine the nature and tendency of all our actions, and how diligent in endeavouring to learn the whole of God's will! Most appropriate are the words of the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from my secret faults." Many and various are the happy effects which an enlarged view of the holiness of God will have upon us. It will inspire us with fear of offending him, and with awe of his glorious majesty; it will even fill us with greater admiration and love; it will make us feel more strongly that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" it will bring the admonition more

powerfully to our hearts, “ Be ye holy, for I am holy ;” it will cause us to desire more earnestly to be renewed in holiness after his image ; it will make us to be more tremblingly alive lest we fall into sin, to enquire more carefully into all “ the commandments of the Lord our God concerning things which should not be done,” and to exercise ourselves the more diligently, “ to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.”

2. Surely we ought also to feel from this subject that a tremendous load of guilt has been contracted by us. Reckon up all the sins which you *remember* that you have committed. Add to these those various transgressions which you have now forgotten, but which nevertheless stand recorded in the book of God’s remembrance. Let those many sins be put to the account, of which you were ignorant, at the time that you committed them, that they were sins, and of which perhaps you are still ignorant: these also have all been noted of God. Surely in this bringing together of all your offences,

you will feel the force of the question in Job, xxii. 5. “Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?” What a long account would be here to be added up! What a mountain of guilt would here be heaped together! Every mouth must be stopped against uttering a single word in self-justification or even extenuation, but opened to such humble and penitent confessions as these in the scriptures, “Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me;” or as these in the Communion service of our own church, ‘We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.’ Yes, this is the way in which

we should feel our transgressions, and in which we should humble ourselves greatly before the holy God whose commandments we have broken. We shall never feel as we ought to do, till we feel thus. God will never look to us with mercy till we are thus poor, and of a contrite spirit, and tremble at his word. We shall never seek the remedy of the atonement, till we are thus sensible of our guilt. My brethren, blessed be God, there is an atonement, and this ceremony of the sin-offering does not more clearly convict us all of sin, than it sets before us that merciful, precious, and all-sufficient, atonement, which God has provided for us, and which we may bring to him in sure and stedfast faith of its acceptance.

3. Let me here then again repeat to you, a repetition which to me indeed is not grievous, and for you it is safe, that the human nature of the Son of God offered upon the cross, is the great sin-offering for all our offences, whether committed knowingly or ignorantly, whether of omission or commission, whether in thought, word, or deed.

That great sacrifice, when brought by us in faith, “ shall make an atonement for us as concerning our sin, and it shall be forgiven us.” One part of this ceremony, peculiar to the sin-offering, is directly applied to him by the Apostle when writing to the Hebrews, in these words, “ For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” The Saviour was led out of Jerusalem, and suffered on Mount Calvary, some small distance out of the city, that he might fulfil even this apparently slight circumstance, so as to shew still more distinctly that all these observancies of the law had their full completion in him. And how great is the efficacy of that sacrifice ! Let the sins of any one man be set forth from his cradle to his grave. They would be found, as I have stated, numberless as the sand on the sea-shore. Yet for all these is that one sacrifice sufficient to atone. Not only so, but it is sufficient to atone for all the

sins of *all* sinners ; for all the sins that have ever been committed on the face of this earth for six thousand years and more, and for all that shall be yet committed so long as it continues to exist ; and it *has* atoned for all the sins of every one of those sinners who have believed on him with their hearts unto righteousness, and it *will* atone for all who in like manner shall truly believe on him till he comes to his last judgment. Such is the value of that one sacrifice once for all offered up on Cavalry. Oh ! that you all knew how to esteem it rightly ! And oh ! that none of you would rest in a fruitless expectation of partaking of its benefit, while you do not personally bring that sacrifice by faith, and offer it in expiation of your sins to God. However sufficient it be for the salvation of all men, none will be saved by it but those who do thus themselves make use of it. The offending priest, or ruler, or common person, must *himself* bring his sin-offering, must lay *his own* hands upon its head, must thus shew how nearly and deeply he felt *himself* to be concerned in the ceremony ; and every sinner

now must individually bring this sacrifice of Christ in faith as the atonement for his own sin. He must not rest in such generalities as that ‘we are all sinners,’ and ‘Christ died for all.’ Ah! no. He must feel and apply all this to himself. He must say, as it were, ‘O Lord God, *I* am indeed a sinner, a great and grievous sinner against thee; but here is my sin-offering; here is the sacrifice of thine own blessed Son; here is the atonement of thine appointment; this I bring to thee with my soul’s approval, and my heart’s desire that it may be accepted for me, and put away all my sin.’ It is in this manner, brethren, that our own sin must be felt and confessed, and our own faith must be exercised upon this great atoning sacrifice of Christ.

4. Let me then further entreat you to consider how desperate must be the condition of those who gain not a personal interest in the atonement of Christ. You see what was the case under the law: there was no pardon, even for a sin of ignorance, except through an atonement: without the shedding of blood there was no remission. So it is

under the gospel. And thus the divine and mighty Saviour himself determines it, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye will die in your sins.” With these words he sent forth his Apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.”—These Apostles with one voice declare “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved.” How plain, explicit, and decisive are these statements! and I might confirm them, as you well know, by numbers more of similar purport. How desperate then, as I have said, must be the state of those who neglect so great salvation! Here is now no more sacrifice that can be actually offered; all the atonement that can be made, has been made. All that we can now do is to avail ourselves of the sacrifice offered. It is the only remedy: and if we do not apply and appropriate this, there is no other deviseable way of obtaining pardon and peace; no other atonement can possibly be

found. I urge this point. It is on this that I would be more earnest than on any other. It is the very turning point of your salvation. It is moreover the very substance, and essence of our commission. We are to preach "Christ crucified." The doctrine of the Son of God dying upon the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of men is that alone which is to save men's souls, not through the mere declaration of it by us who preach, but through the faithful reception of it by you who hear. This is the doctrine which is so strikingly pointed at by all these ceremonies of the law. It has been prophesied of by all those servants of God who of old were enabled by him to look into and foretell things to come. It has been sung in ancient days in strains which shew its divine influence upon the heart. And it has been stated in terms as simple and clear as so high a mystery admits of, in the blessed gospel. Brethren, let me earnestly, yet affectionately, remind you that it would be next to impossible that the sin of unbelief should be in you a sin of ignorance. Nay it must be a sin of careless disregard, or of

inveterate prejudice, or of daring and impious rejection of the truth. Let me conclude these reflections with a short address to each of these different classes.

First, to those who negligently and carelessly give no serious regard to these all-important truths of God's holy word; and these, I fear, constitute a large portion of my hearers. You think not of nor do you feel your sins as you ought to do. You allow yourselves to disregard divine subjects of all kinds far more than is consistent with your soul's safety. You hear the truth, you do not object against it, nay perhaps you assent to it, but you do not receive it. The sacrifice of Christ is not thought of, nor valued, nor desired, nor applied for, as it should be, as it must be to be saved by it. Let me earnestly beseech you to give due and serious attention to these infinitely interesting truths. Let me intreat you to endeavour to gain an interest and part in this great salvation. I beseech you hear not of the sacrifice of Christ in vain. Let him not have died in vain so far as you are concerned. Oh! if you would think

of his death in a suitable manner, and apply it for the salvation of your own soul with serious earnestness, how happy would it be for you, and how sure would you then be of obtaining that salvation, which you are now in such danger of losing; nay which you certainly will lose, through your negligence, if you continue in this careless disregard of it!

Secondly, to those who receive not the truth through inveterate prejudice against it. Whence originates this prejudice? Clearly there is nothing in the sacrifice of Christ itself, by which it ought to be excited. The origin is to be sought in some wrong feeling, in some bad state of your own heart. The doctrine of the cross, it is true, is humiliating. Natural pride excites a strong dislike to it. It treats us all as sinners, and this is revolting to your undue estimation of yourselves. You would establish your own righteousness: you will not think so lowly of yourselves as you ought to do, while the doctrine of the gospel lays you as low as the very dust. Being unwilling therefore to submit to this humbling way of salvation you set yourselves against

it, and refuse to receive it. Again, the doctrine of the cross calls to self-denial, and renunciation of the world, and sin, and this prejudices you yet more against it. Such a reason is assigned by Christ himself, who best knew what is in man, “This,” says he, “is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.” Thus the love of the world, and the indulgence of sin fill you with perverse opposition to the doctrine of Christ, and “you will not come to him that you might have life.” Oh! that I could make you see and feel the true reasons of your prejudice and opposition, that becoming deeply ashamed of them, you might cast them altogether out of your hearts, and meekly submit yourself to the righteousness of God, and deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow Christ.

Lastly, to those who daringly and impiously deny and reject the truth altogether. Alas there *are* such: but I hope that there are none such in this congregation. For these are in a dreadful state indeed. Rejecting the sacrifice

of Christ, which is the only atonement for sin, denying the Lord that bought them with his own precious blood, what can they look for but to be broken in pieces as a potter's vessel, and to be cast for ever from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power? Nothing can be more awful than that the divinity and atonement of Christ should be denied, when these are the only foundations of sinful man's salvation. This is a heresy, my brethren, against which I would warn you in the strongest terms. It destroys the first principles of Christianity, and plunges a dagger into its very vitals. It degrades the eternal Son of God into a mere man, and makes his death of no more value than that of another. May God deliver you all from this deceivableness of error, which must needs be the ruin of the soul, and teach you to confess, with a true faith, that Jesus is the Son of God, and his death the propitiation for our sins.

SERMON VI.

THE TRESPASS-OFFERING.

LEVIT. VI. 6, 7.

And he shall bring his trespass-offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass-offering unto the priest : and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord : and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.

I HAVE read to you these words as introductory to the consideration of another of those offerings which were enjoined upon the Jews, and which were so remarkably typical of the sacrifice of Christ. This is the trespass-offering, which in some particulars differs but little from the sin-offering, but in others there is a

strong and plainly marked distinction, as we shall see by an examination of it.

The offences which required the presenting of a trespass-offering, were, first, those which are mentioned in the four first verses of the fifth chapter. These were the concealing any part of the truth by a witness who gave evidence on oath ; the touching of any unclean person or thing ; and the swearing rashly that he would do what might be sinful, or what he might not be able to perform. In all these cases he was to make a voluntary confession that he had sinned, and he was to bring as a trespass-offering unto the Lord, a female lamb or kid, which was to be offered with precisely the same ceremonies as the sin-offering, except that the blood, instead of being put upon the horns of the altar, was to be sprinkled round about the altar. If the offender was too poor to give a lamb, then he was to bring two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, one of which was to be offered with the ceremonies of the sin-offering, and the other with the ceremonies of the burnt-offering. If he was so very poor that he could not procure even

these, then he was to offer the tenth part of an ephah, that is about five pints, of fine flour, without either oil or frankincense, both which always accompanied the meat-offering, and this was to be offered with the ceremonies of the meat-offering.

A second class of offences, for which a trespass-offering was necessary, consisted in any trespass committed through ignorance in the holy things of the Lord, that is, if any one had unwittingly kept back any of the required offerings which were to be made to the Lord, or had eaten any of those parts of the sacrifices which were the due of the priests, then he was to bring as a trespass-offering a ram without blemish. But besides this, he was to make restitution, a proper estimation being made in standard money of the value of that which had thus been misappropriated, and moreover he was to add a fifth part more of this estimated value. Nay even if he only suspected that he had offended in any of these holy things of the Lord, he was to bring the ram as a trespass-offering, and to pay the estimated value, but without

the addition of the fifth part. Doing thus the priest should make an atonement for him, and it should be forgiven him.

A third class of offences which required a trespass-offering were actions whereby another person was injured ; as when any one denied what had been committed to his trust, or dealt fraudulently in any concern of partnership, or took any thing away by open violence, or secretly deceived his neighbour to his loss, or denied the having found that which was lost. In all these cases he must bring a ram for a trespass-offering, and must pay the value, estimated by the priest, of the injury done, with the addition of the fifth part thereof ; and thus again, “ the priest should make an atonement for him before the Lord, and it should be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.”

I think that you cannot but have noticed the number of various sacrifices which were required of the Jews. We have now considered the burnt-offering, the meat-offering, the peace-offering, the sin-offering, and the

trespass-offering. And besides these there were others expressly appointed for the priests, and for certain particular occasions, as well as the daily burnt sacrifices offered morning and evening, which we have yet hereafter to consider. Now these multiplied offerings, which the people were required to bring, with the many various minute ritual observances imposed upon them, were, as St. Peter says in the Acts of the Apostles, “ a yoke, which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear.” We have but one sacrifice ; nay we have not even to find that one sacrifice at our own cost ; it has been found for us. The Apostle draws this contrast between the *many* sacrifices of the Jews, and the *one* sacrifice of Christ in a very striking manner in his Epistle to the Hebrews. He says in the tenth chapter, “ Every high priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins : but this man, after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For by *one* offering he hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified." He had before said in the ninth chapter, and at the twenty-fifth verse, "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Here then we have 'a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,' in the one offering of Jesus Christ. That is of itself sufficient to atone for all our sins and trespasses. And justly is it sufficient, for it is an offering of value, of unspeakable, inconceivable value. The Apostle, in writing to the Colossians, shews the reason why "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," when he describes him

thus, “ who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature : for by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him and for him : and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” He is, as you know, the second person in the Holy Trinity, who made this offering of himself in human nature, and whose offering is therefore fully equal to compensate for all the sins of all mankind. Those who believe in him truly, and prove the reality of their faith by the devotedness of their lives to his service, have a part in this compensation, and will be delivered from guilt and condemnation. It is this divine nature, this eternal godhead, of Jesus Christ, which gives the value to his sacrifice. May God enable us all to see how necessarily that truth is connected with the circumstances of our redemption, and teach us to know that all “ these things were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and

that believing, we might have life through his name."

I now desire your attention to some circumstances particularly mentioned as connected with the trespass-offering, and which therefore we have not had occasion to consider in our previous sermons.

I. A voluntary confession was required. Thus we read in the fifth chapter and fifth verse, "And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing." Nothing can be more suitable in any case whatever than that a sinner should confess his sin, and such confession is a necessary ingredient in that repentance, without which it is impossible to find mercy. It is expressly said in the Proverbs, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." And this acknowledgment of sin is not only to be made in all particular transgressions; but as a feeling of sin must constantly be on the mind, so a confession of it must be constantly and universally made. So St. John teaches

us in the first chapter of his first epistle and the eighth verse, “ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” All have sinned ; all are sinners both by nature and practice ; and all must penitently acknowledge themselves to be sinners in the presence of God. Impressed with this truth the compilers of our excellent Liturgy have caused a general confession to be the first act of the whole congregation whenever we assemble together for public prayer, whether morning or evening. I hope that I need not repeat the words to you ; but I beseech you to consider how very appropriate both the act and the words are in such a place, and I pray that you may feel their force, and use them sincerely, and be truly penitent whenever you repeat them after the minister.

The confession however which was to be made when a trespass-offering was presented,

had reference to the particular sin which had been committed. This was to be confessed to God and his priest, and to the individual also who had been injured. The least that can be done, whether God or man has been offended, is for the offender to acknowledge his fault, express his contrition, and ask forgiveness. It is a necessary humiliation, and he must be full of insufferable pride, who refuses it. The duty is here expressly taught, and it is fully implied in our Lord's admonition, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times a day turn again to thee saying I repent, thou shalt forgive him." He is inculcating forgiveness, repeated forgiveness, but he forgets not to mark the duty of the offender, as well as of the person offended. There is however scarcely any Christian duty against which the heart more rebels. To confess and ask pardon of another is a hard saying to our natural pride. When we know that we have done wrong, when we would even willingly wish

to repair the wrong, we are kept back from doing it by a proud unwillingness to acknowledge our fault. Perhaps there is scarcely a greater mortification than this. Yet it is a mortification which God requires in his law, as here, and in his gospel too. “Confess your faults one to another.” My brethren, nothing is more aimed at in every part of the word of God than the producing of humility in our naturally proud and unhumbled hearts. As we fell by pride, we must rise by humility: and as we must keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man, so we must humble ourselves both towards God and towards man whenever we offend against either. We cannot learn this duty from the *example* of Christ, for he did no sin, either against God or man, but we are taught it most powerfully by the first principles of his word.

II. A second circumstance especially connected with the trespass-offering deserves our notice, namely the restitution which was required to be made, when any thing had been withheld or misapplied which ought to

have been given to the Lord or the priest, or when a neighbour had been defrauded of any thing which belonged to him. The law was that restitution should be made to the full estimated value, and also a fifth part besides, and if the individual who had been injured was dead, and had no near kinsman to whom the restitution could be made, then it was to be given to the priest. You will find this part of the law in the fifth chapter of Numbers, and seventh verse. This again is one of the works meet for repentance, nay, without which repentance can by no means be considered real. Whenever we have defrauded, we must restore at least to the full amount; but in all cases where restitution was required by the Jewish law more than the full amount was imposed, in some cases fourfold was to be restored, and in the most aggravated ones of theft, even sevenfold was to be paid. Though this be not always a matter of law with us, and there may be many cases of which the law cannot take cognizance, yet it must always be a matter of conscience. These cases, for which the trespass-offering

was appointed, were all such as the law could not reach. In every state of society much must necessarily be left to the conscience ; and here it is that the true penitent and the real Christian will appear. We have a bright example of this right feeling of conscience in the character of Zaccheus. He says, “ Behold Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore four-fold.” He was a Jew, and although he could not have been convicted by either the Jewish or the Roman law, yet his conscience led him to restore to the full amount required by the law which he professed. Little title can that man have to the character of Christian, whose conscience is satisfied so long as he can evade the penalties of the law of the land. But many, it is to be feared, do live in the frequent violation of the law of conscience. Frauds are committed on the revenue of the country, or on public trusts, or on individuals, and the conscience sleeps ; no feeling is excited but that of fear of a discovery : the offender dies with

his unjustly-gotten gains in his possession, without confession and restitution ; and he then, oh ! then goes to give an account of the manner in which he obtained them before a tribunal, which he cannot escape, and whose judgments are recorded against all the unrighteous, against all who do wrong, and defraud.—Behold then the Christian doctrines of confession and restitution taught us by the Jewish law respecting the trespass-offering. The external ceremonies may be abolished or changed ; but the great principles of piety and morality remain. And those who are taught them, as we are, both out of the law and out of the gospel, will have no excuse to offer if they transgress them, or if, having transgressed them, they do not humbly confess, and conscientiously repair the wrong, as far as lies in their power. May he, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, give us grace to exhibit these necessary marks of a genuine repentance, and pardon our sins through his own sacrifice.

III. For I must observe to you, as a third circumstance to be noticed in the trespass-offering, that although confession and restitution were both required, yet it was the sacrifice that made the atonement: "the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass-offering, and it shall be forgiven him."

The great Christian doctrine here is seen as strongly as possible, namely, that to the atonement alone we owe all our pardon and peace. Contrition, confession, restitution, all the feelings which accompany, and all the works which are meet for, repentance, are indispensable; but it is faith in the atonement of Christ which alone justifies. Upon that alone must the penitent's hope be placed. While he weeps tears of grief and shame, while he renounces all his evil ways, while he strives to undo all the evil which he had previously done, the sacrifice of Christ must be looked to as the only meritorious cause, the only appointed method, of mercy. For this his earnest application must be made; without this his repentance, or what might be called repentance, will avail him nothing. We have

a most striking instance in the scriptures themselves of the inefficacy of such a repentance in the lamentable case of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of our Lord. In him appear all the three great marks of repentance. There was a strong feeling of contrition and fear, for he could no longer bear his life under it; there was confession of his crime, for he came to the chief priest and said, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood; there was restitution, for he threw down the thirty pieces of silver, the price which he had received for his treachery; but there was no application to Christ; there was no faith in his atonement. Hence there was no hope; there was nothing but despair; he departed, and hanged himself. He died by his own hand, without a hope of mercy, because he believed not in the efficacy of that innocent blood which he had been the means of shedding. In fact, if his feelings and actions be accurately looked into, they will all be found deficient. His contrition wanted that humbled shame and grief of spirit, which constitutes a godly sorrow; his confession should

have been made, not to the accomplices in his guilt, but to the master whom he had betrayed, and the fellow-disciples whom he had deserted; he should indeed have spurned the money • which was the price of blood, but his reparation of his sin should have been by a more firm profession of the Saviour and his gospel: like St. Peter, he should have endeavoured the more to strengthen his brethren; like St. Paul, he should have more vigorously preached the faith which he had attempted to destroy. And all this deficiency is evidently to be attributed to that one great defect, his want of faith in the atonement of the Son of God, his want of application of that blood which cleanseth from all sin to his own crime.

Thus I have endeavoured again to shew you how the great principles of the gospel are taught by the law. May the Holy Spirit enable you to understand, feel, and act upon these truths. May he give you a true repentance and a living faith. May he lead you to that atonement through which guilt is removed, so that you may not die in the trespass which

you have trespassed, and in the sin which you have sinned, but rather, may have all your trespasses and all your sins forgiven through the merit of that sacrifice which Jesus has offered for you. Oh ! that that divine Saviour may be more and more recommended to you by every view which we can take of him through these early ceremonies of the Mosaic law. For what were the scriptures written, for what do you read them or listen to them, for what do we preach to you, but that you may believe in him, and believing may have life through his name ? My brethren, regard him as the sum and substance of all revelation, and read and hear that he may become increasingly precious to your hearts by faith.

SERMON VII.

CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS.

LEVIT. VIII. 1—3.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin-offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread ; and gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

IN all the preceding sermons on the offerings which the children of Israel were required to offer, we have seen an order of men bearing a very important part in the service. These were the priests of the Lord, who officiated in the tabernacle, and ministered in holy things between the Lord and his worshippers. In the twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Exodus, Aaron and his sons were expressly

designated for this sacred office, and particular directions were then given respecting the ceremonies with which they should be consecrated to it, and the robes which they should wear. The priesthood was to remain in that family through all succeeding generations, and no one, who was not of the descendants of Aaron, might on any account intrude into it. Aaron himself was the first high priest. He was succeeded by Eleazar, his eldest surviving son, after the death of Nadab and Abihu, and it continued in his family through seven generations till the time of Eli. On his death it was removed from that branch for the wickedness of Eli's sons, and given to the descendants of Ithamar, Aaron's other son. In the time of Solomon it returned again into the line of Eleazar, in which it continued till the Babylonish captivity.—Jeshua, the first high priest after the return of the Jews, was of the same family, but after his time the appointment was very uncertain and irregular, and after Judæa became a Roman province, no regard whatever was paid to the original appointment of

the Lord. The office was often sold to the highest bidder, persons obtained it who were not even of the family of Aaron at all, and it was frequently held for no longer a time than for a single year. The nation was then fast filling up the measure of its iniquities; its whole civil and ecclesiastical polity was going to decay; and the entire state was full of disorder, confusion, and every evil work.

In the present sermon I propose to consider the consecration of Aaron and his sons to their respective offices. The congregation was publicly gathered together, that the people might be witnesses of the solemn ceremony, and thereby learn the reverence which was due to those whom God had appointed to minister to them in holy things.

I. The first ceremony was that of ablution. "Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water." This certainly was to intimate that the greatest purity in morals and character is required of those who are appointed to be priests. Having their bodies washed with pure water in this their

public and outward setting apart to their sacred office, doubtless denoted that they should be clear from all moral defilements, “sober, just, holy; temperate,” “of good behaviour,” and “blameless,” as St. Paul teaches that Christian bishops must be, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. Nothing can be more unbecoming in itself, and nothing has so dreadfully injurious an effect upon religion, as any immoralities on the part of those who should be not only spiritual pastors and teachers, but patterns also of all good and holy living. An immoral priest, let him belong to what church he may, is a disgrace to his profession, and well would it be for himself, well for the whole body of his clerical brethren, well for the particular congregation in which he officiates, well for the Christian community to which he belongs, well for the nation in which he lives, if such a one were not suffered by the rulers of the church, or countenanced by the people. The clergyman should ever be “an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity ;” he, above all men, should “shew

himself a pattern of good works ;” his character should be so holy and exemplary that he may ever “ have a good report of them which are without :” that the enemies of the truths which he preaches, or the office which he bears, may have no evil thing to say of him, and all “ may be ashamed who falsely accuse his good conversation in Christ.” Oh ! that the ministers of the church of Christ were one and all what Christ designed that his church itself might be when he gave himself for it, “ that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

II. The second ceremony was that of arraying Aaron and his sons in their appointed garments, made according to express directions given in the twenty-eighth and other chapters of the book of Exodus. The robes of the high priest were principally conspicuous, and were in order as follows, as they are enumerated in the seventh verse,

1. The coat and its girdle. This was the undermost garment worn by the high priest. The particular form of it is not described, but it is supposed to have had sleeves, reaching down to the wrists. It was made of fine linen, very curiously embroidered, and fastened to the body by a girdle made of fine twined linen, with needle work of blue, and purple, and scarlet.

2. Next above this was the robe of the Ephod. This was entirely of blue. It had an opening at the top, through which the high priest passed his head, made secure by a binding of woven work that it might not be rent in putting on. On the bottom hem, which is supposed to have reached to the ankles, were alternately a golden bell and an artificial pomegranate made of blue, purple, and scarlet. The bells were placed here that their sound might give notice when the high priest went into the holy place before the Lord, and when he came out.

3. We come next to a more particular part of the high priest's dress. This was the Ephod, or outer garment. It was a short

coat without sleeves, of very rich workmanship made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, embroidered with curious work and much gold. It was kept on by means of two shoulder straps attached to it, and by a girdle made of the same materials, and embroidered after the same manner. On each shoulder-piece of the Ephod was placed an onyx stone set in an ouch of gold, and on these stones were engraven the names of the twelve children of Israel, six on one stone, and six on the other. The reason of this is thus assigned, "And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial," to remind himself that he was officiating on behalf of the people, and to remind the Lord of the gracious promises which he had been pleased to make to them.

4. To the Ephod was attached the most curious and the most important part of the high priest's dress. This was what is called the breast-plate of judgment. It was a square piece of linen double, embroidered with the same richness and after the same manner as

the Ephod. There were set in it twelve precious stones, four rows of three each, every stone having engraven on it the name of one of the twelve children of Jacob. These were placed there for the same purpose as those on the onyx stones on the shoulders, as we read in the twenty-ninth verse of the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus. The breast-plate was the breast-plate of judgment, because by means of it the high priest received the judgment of God on any matters concerning which he consulted the Lord. It was kept on the breast by two wreathen chains of pure gold, passing from two rings of gold on its *upper* part to the ouches of gold in which the onyx stones were set on the top of each shoulder, and by a lace of blue passing through two other rings of gold on its lower corners, and through two similar rings placed on the Ephod. In the breast-plate were put what are called the Urim and Thummin. What these were, of what materials, or of what form, we have no information. The meaning of the words is Lights and Perfections. The use of them however, so long as they were in use,

is clear. They were the means by which the high priest enquired of the Lord in all matters in which it was necessary to have recourse to him for instruction and direction. In some way or other God gave him power to make a perfect declaration of his will, whenever he was thus duly consulted on any important matters that concerned the public welfare or duty. There is little said of this mode of enquiring of the Lord after the building of Solomon's temple, and it is clear from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, that the Urim and Thummim were at that time lost. But while they were possessed they formed a wonderful privilege enjoyed by the nation, and on more occasions than one were the means by which they obtained directions what they should do in some critical emergency.

• 5. The last thing which we have to notice in the dress of the high priest was his mitre. This was made of fine linen, rolled up something in the manner of a turban, and worn upon his head. A plate of pure gold was tied upon it by a blue lace, on which was

engraved in conspicuous letters the sentence, "Holiness to the Lord," and placed exactly upon his forehead. The use of it is thus given, "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts, and it shall be always upon his forehead that they may be accepted before the Lord."

Such were the garments of Aaron, when he was consecrated the high priest of the children of Israel. These he was always to wear whenever he officiated publicly in his high and holy office. The dresses of his sons, the ordinary priests, were coats and girdles similar to those of their father. Their ephod were only of plain white linen. They had no robe of the ephod, nor breast-plate, and instead of the mitre with its golden plate, they had bonnets on their heads, of which the form and material are not mentioned.

III. The third ceremony in the consecration of Aaron and his sons was the anointing them with holy oil. This was made of the most precious spices according to express

directions, and was to be used for these and no other purposes whatever. None was to be made like it, for being applied to so sacred and solemn a ceremony it was to be considered as *most holy* unto the Lord. With this Moses “anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar, and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head, and anointed him to sanctify him.” We remember how the Psalmist compares the love and unity of brethren to this anointing. “It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.” We remember how it is applied in another psalm to our own great and glorious High Priest, and quoted in reference to him by the Apostle, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows.”

IV. The fourth and last part of the ceremony of the consecration of Aaron and his sons consists of the sacrifices which were offered upon that occasion. The first of these was a bullock for a sin-offering. For Aaron and his sons were but poor sinful creatures, and they had need to offer a sacrifice for their own sins, before they could be qualified to offer for the sins of the people. A sin-offering was therefore brought, which Moses himself, officiating on this special occasion, killed on their behalf, and sacrificed with all the particular ceremonies respecting the blood, and the fat, and the burning of the body without the camp, which were prescribed for a sin-offering. Then was brought a ram for a burnt-offering. This you remember was in all cases a voluntary oblation. In the present instance it denoted the deep sense which the offerers had of the magnitude and importance of the work to which they were set apart, and well might their minds be under a more than ordinary solemnity. It expressed also their willing dedication of themselves to the service of the Lord in this

office. This animal therefore was also offered with the proper ceremonies of the burnt-offering, and was consequently consumed whole upon the altar. Next was brought another ram, which is peculiarly called the ram of consecration, and along with it a basket of unleavened bread : these were brought as their peace-offering, and offered with the ceremonies appointed for that sacrifice, yet with the addition of one circumstance peculiar to the present occasion. We read in the twenty-third verse, “ Moses took the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron’s right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot,” and in the following verse we find that he did the same to Aaron’s sons. This would intimate to them that the whole of their faculties and powers were henceforth to be devoted to the Lord and his service. It would teach them that the work of the ministry required all their attention and activity, and would induce them to “ present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which was their reasonable

service." It was moreover ordered that the time of their being consecrated should continue for seven days, and that so long they should remain day and night in the tabernacle. "Ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you." "Ye shall abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation day and night seven days, and keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not."

Thus, with as much brevity as I was able, I have gone through the ceremony of the consecration of the first Jewish high priest and his sons. I now invite you to the consideration of some reflections which may be made on it.

1. We see that in that dispensation of religion, which God was pleased to give to the Jews, there was a distinct order of men selected by him and solemnly consecrated for administering all its rites. When the divine Saviour came to put an end to that dispensation, and to bring in a better covenant, he also

selected and left behind him a body of men who were to minister his gospel, and were ordained to execute all the sacred functions of the clerical office. The priesthood was no longer confined to one family, but they who had been originally chosen by himself were to commit the same to faithful men by the simple ceremony of the laying on of hands, with prayer for the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. And thus the ministerial office has descended through the successive ages of the Christian church. They have no sacrifices of bulls or rams or goats or fine flour to offer, but the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. Their first and special duty is to preach the gospel : for that a dispensation is committed to them. They are to preach Christ crucified. Their designations are ministers of the Word, ambassadors for God. To them also belongs the administration of the sacraments and the ordinances of religion ; and most of their duties will be found distinctly defined in the epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus. I ask you to pray for them. Their duties are as arduous as their

office is holy. And if even an Apostle could say, "who is sufficient for these things?" much more may the ministers of Christ in these degenerate days feel their need of the prayers of the church for them. "Brethren, pray for us," said one who may well be considered as the chief of the Apostles. Let your prayers then ascend to heaven in behalf of those who now are the ministers of God in sacred things, that they may be wholly devoted to the work of their ministry, that they may be truly enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and filled with all spiritual wisdom and judgment, that they may be zealous and active, that they may be men of pure and holy lives and character, moreover that they may be successful through the grace of the Holy Spirit in winning souls and in turning many from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Pray that their ministry may be greatly blessed to your own souls. Truly in praying for them you pray for yourselves, for of every spiritual blessing that they receive you become the immediate partakers. Their increase in knowledge, love, faith, and holiness, is for your

benefit : so that your prayers when answered for them, return also with blessings into your own bosom. And let me not conclude this head without a particular request that he who now ministers to you the things of God may be borne on your hearts continually, as you are borne on his, before the throne of grace.

2. But I would now direct your thoughts from the servants to the master, from the ministers to the glorious and gracious Lord. I would now say to you, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." He alone sustaineth this office in the Christian dispensation : and in order that he might sustain it, he took the manhood into the godhead. As those whom he came to redeem "are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;" "he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for

the sins of the people.” The priests of the family of Aaron were many, succeeding each other as a predecessor died. “But he continueth ever and hath an unchangeable priesthood.” “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Then the Apostle shews the infinite superiority of Jesus from his sinless nature. “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s, for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” The practical uses of this doctrine of the priesthood of Jesus are also strikingly set forth in this Epistle to the Hebrews from which I have already quoted so largely. Stedfastness in our profession and confidence in his love and power are deduced from it, as we see in the fourth chapter, and fourteenth verse, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the

heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He repeats these uses with additions, and further references to these very consecrations, in the tenth chapter and at the twenty-first verse, as you may read at your leisure. My beloved brethren, let these practical uses drawn by the scripture itself from these old testament ordinances and ceremonies be duly regarded by us. So shall we honour our great High Priest above with the honour which is now his due.

SERMON VIII.

AARON'S ENTRANCE ON HIS OFFICE.

LEVIT. IX. 22—24.

And Aaron lifted up his hand towards the people, and blessed them ; and came down from offering of the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and peace-offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out and blessed the people : and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat : which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

IN our last sermon we saw the solemn consecration of Aaron and his sons to the office of the priesthood. In the present we shall consider the first public service in which

they officiated : and as their appointment had been of God, so a miraculous testimony was given of his approbation and acceptance of their service. Let us consider the subject under the four following heads.

I. The sacrifices offered.

II. The blessing pronounced.

III. The tokens of God's acceptance.

IV. The feelings of the people.

I. The text tells us that Aaron came down from offering the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and peace-offerings. These further prescribed offerings so immediately succeeding those which had been offered at his consecration shews again, and still more strongly, the consciousness which even the holiest and most accepted persons ought to have of their own sinfulness. Those who are holy by office must know and confess that they are sinners by nature, even as others. Priests must be as sensible of this truth in their own case, as any of their people ; and must rely as simply and wholly upon that one great sin-offering of Christ for their own personal pardon and the acceptance of their services, as they teach

their hearers to do for their own. And by the repetition of the burnt-offering, as well as the sin-offering, Aaron was taught, and all who serve in any office of the ministry are also taught, what entire devotedness of themselves to their holy vocation is required of them, and should be voluntarily given.

Moses had also commanded Aaron to say unto the people, "Take ye a kid of the goats for a sin-offering; and a calf and a lamb, both of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt-offering; also a bullock and a ram for peace-offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord; and a meat-offering mingled with oil." The people also, as well as their priests, are again required to bring a sin-offering and a burnt-offering for themselves. Oh! let not our people think that the whole of religious service is to be done for them by the priest. They have their own part to bear in it. He leads the way in the holy service. He confesses sin, he prays to God, he offers praise, he expresses his belief in the great doctrines of the gospel; but they must do the same; they must often repeat the words in which

he leads their service ; and I wish that this were done in a more audible voice than many use. It would show that they take a personal interest in the service. It would prove that they admired and felt what is prepared for them to say. Brethren, your salvation assuredly cannot be laid on the shoulders of your minister. You must attend to it yourselves. He may be instrumental in instructing, convincing, stirring up, and bringing you to God ; but you are to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. As the people of Israel must bring their offering, as well as Aaron must bring his, so you must bring your spiritual sacrifices yourselves, and join with the officiating minister whenever you are expected to bear a part. Very much of the beauty and force of our liturgy is lost through this defect in your part of its worship, very much also of your own comfort and improvement, and very much of the honour which is due to God.

But besides being required to present the same offerings as Aaron, the Israelites had somewhat more to bring. They had also to

offer “ a bullock and a ram for peace-offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord, and a meat-offering mingled with oil.” As a part of the peace-offering, and the whole of the meat-offering, except *the memorial* of it which was burnt unto the Lord, belonged to the priests, and served for their subsistence while they were officiating, *they* were not required to offer these. There are some duties which peculiarly belong to the priest, there are others which peculiarly belong to the people, and may God dispose and enable both to perform what is due to each other as fully and cheerfully, as they are generally ready to expect what is due to themselves. It is universally the business and duty of the one to preach the gospel ; it is that of the other to provide that they who preach the gospel may live of the gospel.

II. I now pass to the second head proposed, namely, the blessing pronounced upon the people. First, *Aaron* blessed them. As soon as he had performed the whole duty of offering his own sacrifices and theirs, he “ lifted up his hand toward the people, and

blessed them.” Then Moses and he went together into the tabernacle of the congregation, for what purpose is not mentioned, but probably that Moses might show him how his services there should be performed, and again they came out, and *joined together* in blessing the people. In some suitable words they pronounced the pardon and peace of God unto them, and made known to them his acceptance of their offerings, and prayed for all temporal and spiritual blessings for them. This became afterwards a stated and solemn part of the priestly office, and the form of words in which the blessing was to be given is thus written down in the book of Numbers, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, the Lord bless thee, and keep thee : The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

It is impossible for us here not to think of that merciful and faithful high priest of ours,

who after having finished the work which was given him to do upon earth, having offered that great atoning sacrifice, not indeed for his own sins, for he had no sin, but for the sins of his people, before he entered into that tabernacle above, which has received him until the times of the restitution of all things, having “led out his disciples as far as to Bethany, there lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass that while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight.” And what does he now that he ever liveth to intercede for us, and is continually officiating on our behalf, but pour down all spiritual blessings upon his waiting, praying, and serving people?

To bless in the name of the Lord is also still a part of the ministerial office. St. Paul commonly concludes his epistles with a most affectionate as well as solemn benediction, as “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” And this form our church has adopted wherewith

her ministers are to conclude the service of their morning and evening prayer; while that which I before quoted from the book of Numbers concludes the office for the visitation of the sick: moreover a declaration of the Apostle's is thrown into the form of a benediction which closes the communion service, and with which also the clergy generally dismiss their congregations after the sermon. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus," to which is added another solemn benediction in the name of the Holy Trinity, "And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you, and remain with you evermore. Amen." Thus our Christian church has adopted the forms of both the old testament and the new, and blesses her people by the mouth of her ministers in the words of God himself. May your hearts be always waiting to receive the blessing. May it rest upon you in an abundant measure. And may you always return to your homes from the house of God with the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ

accompanying you, and remaining on your souls in all its own mercy, grace, and glory.

III. I proceed to consider, under the third head, the tokens of God's approbation and acceptance. They had been taught to expect this. Moses had said, after commanding Aaron and them to bring their respective offerings, "For to-day the Lord will appear unto you:" and again, "And the glory of the Lord shall appear unto you." And so it came to pass, as we also read in the text, "The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people." To put an honour upon the service for the first time performed by the high priest of his own appointing, the Lord condescended in some visible manner to shew his glory. As the glory of the Lord had filled the tabernacle when it was first erected and finished, so now it appears again at the first service regularly performed in it by his high priest. Again, at the dedication of the temple by Solomon, when the nation was become a great and mighty nation, and when sacrifices of sheep and oxen were offered "that could not be told nor numbered for multitude,"

the same exhibition of God's favourable acceptance was made manifest. "It came to pass," we read in the eighth chapter of the first book of Kings and the tenth verse, "when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud ; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."

The glory of the Lord has not appeared to the Christian church in the form in which it was wont to do to the church of old. The Lord has not descended to earth in a pillar of fire, or a cloud ; he hath not come down in the thunderings and lightnings and loud trumpet-sounds with which he descended on Mount Sinai, when he came to deliver his law ; he appears not in the brightness of the *Shechinah* on the mercy-seat ; but he has come in a manner more congenial to the mercy, and love, and peace, which he has delighted to manifest in the gospel. He has come from heaven in the mild radiance of the person of Jesus Christ. *HE* is "the brightness of

his father's glory and the express image of his person." He "was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory," says that disciple whom he loved, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the father,) full of grace and truth." In the person of Jesus Christ the glorious God has appeared in this our evangelical dispensation; and if the former covenant was glorious from the frequent displays which it had of the glory of God attending it, yet hath it no glory in comparison of that which has accompanied the promulgation of the gospel, and which so far excelleth it. The glory of the gospel consists in that great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Besides this visible appearance of the glory of the Lord to the Israelites on this their first public service, there was another, and yet more decisive testimony of his acceptance of their offerings. For as we further read in the text, "There came out a fire from before

the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat," that is, all that was placed last upon the altar, the parts of the previous offerings having been burnt by common fire. What a decisive and satisfactory proof was this that the Lord God was among them, had witnessed the service of his appointed high priest, had accepted their sacrifices, and confirmed the blessing. Oh! how gracious was the Lord in this to both priest and people. We read in a later part of their history that God was pleased to testify his approbation and acceptance of the dedication and service of the temple by the same sign. In the second book of Chronicles, the seventh chapter and first verse, we find these words, "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house." Also in that great trial of the prophetic character and mission which took place between Elijah and the priests of Baal, recorded in the first book of Kings and the eighteenth chapter, there we also read in the

thirty-eighth verse, "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." And as that testimony was given in confirmation of Elijah's office and authority according to his own prayer "let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word," so these tokens were now given in establishment of the office of Aaron as his priest, and of Moses as his law-giver, and that they also had done all these things according to his directions and commandment.

Had the Christian church any thing at the introduction of the gospel, which corresponds to this token of the Lord's presence and acceptance? Behold "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they" (that is, the disciples) "were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting : and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of

fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Oh! yes, the appearance of the Holy Ghost as a dove, and the voice from heaven, testified to the acceptance of the blessed Jesus in the great work of man's redemption on which he was then entering, and the descent of the same person of the Holy Trinity upon the disciples in the likeness of cloven tongues of fire gave proof of the Lord's acceptance of them, and at the same time qualified them for the successful preaching of that work of mercy in all the world.

IV. I come now to consider the last head of this sermon, namely, the feelings of the people. We read in the conclusion of the text, that "when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces." Their admiration was great, they shouted for joy at these tokens of the Lord's acceptance of their service, and prostrated themselves before him in humble and grateful adoration and praise. The same effects followed in

those other similar instances to which I have referred. For when the same tokens of the Lord's acceptance were manifested at the dedication of the temple by Solomon, then we read that, "When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." And in that other case of Elijah and the priests of Baal, in which the fire of the Lord fell, and thereby testified of the acceptance of Elijah, "when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God." Thus strongly mixed were the feelings of reverence and joy. They exulted in these manifest tokens of the Lord's presence and favour; they worshipped him with holy devotion and reverential awe.

And what? Have we no cause for holy joy, and animated praise, and profound reverence of God? Have we no tokens of his presence and favour for which we may bless

his holy name, and rejoice in him? Has not he that believeth a witness in himself? Does not the Spirit himself bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God? These are still testimonies of the happiest kind of his mercy and love towards us: these honours now attend on the ministrations of our great High Priest above, and prove to our infinite satisfaction and joy that his sacrifice and offerings are accepted on our behalf, and that we and our services are accepted in him. Let it not be thought that the ministry of Jesus is in any respect inferior to that of Aaron. No. As the glory in which the Lord has appeared among us is greater than that in which he manifested himself to the Israelites, so the tokens by which he assures and rejoices our hearts are greater also. They may not be outward and visible signs: but they are better; they are inward and spiritual graces. They may not be beheld with our eyes; but they are felt in our hearts. Let then these tokens of his love and presence and of our acceptance in Christ have their suitable effects upon us. Let them fill

us at once with joy and humility ; with joy that we have such testimonies given to us ; with humility that we are utterly unworthy of even the least of his mercies. Every repeated or increased token of his “ kindness towards us in Christ Jesus ” should humble us in the very dust before him, making us more and more conscious that this is far beyond our deserts. That such poor services as we can offer him should meet with such returns would indeed be beyond all comprehension and belief. But what may we not believe and what may we not expect when we think of the richness and value of the offering offered, and the service performed by the Priest who now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God ? There, Christian brethren, are the merits and the worthiness. There is the procurer of every token of acceptance and favour ; and the more simply we trust in his merits, and the more entirely we rely on his sacrifice, the more of such tokens shall we assuredly receive.

Alas that any of you should be negligent of Christ, and of his great undertaking on

your behalf. What possible hope can you have of the mercy of God, or of any testimonies of your acceptance, while you neither bring the appointed sacrifice, nor rely on the consecrated High Priest? The appointed sacrifice, even the burnt-offering, and the sin-offering, and the peace-offering, and the meat-offering, is the sacrifice of Christ, which you are to bring, by faith, to the altar. He is also the consecrated High Priest of the Christian church, and there is no way of access or possibility of acceptance except through him. Without him every service that you could offer would be rejected. A multitude of sacrifices would be to no purpose; oblations would be vain; incense would be an abomination; even the solemn meeting would be iniquity. Let me then beseech you to apply your whole soul to the sacrifice and merits of Christ, that you may be blessed by him, that from him also you may receive the spiritual tokens of acceptance, and finally partake of his glory in the day when he shall again appear to judgment.

SERMON IX.

NADAB AND ABIHU.

LEVIT. x. 1, 2, 3.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

WE read here of one of those awful visitations by which God has in different ages manifested his resentment against sin, and his power to punish it. Generally he beareth

long; and hence too many are found who presume upon impunity, nay, who not only do not fear and repent of their first sin, but repeat it again and again, and even proceed to other and greater transgressions. Thus we find it written, “ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” But the scriptures also record instances in which God has not unfrequently exhibited his righteous indignation against sinners and their transgressions in a manner which cannot be mistaken, and which ought to operate as a powerful warning to all who read or hear of them. The present is one of them. May God shed a holy fear of himself upon all our hearts, as we consider it.

I. Let us, in the first place, consider who and what they were upon whom this judgment was executed. They were Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron. From the expectations which are naturally entertained of the eldest sons, they would be regarded by Aaron as the hopes of his family.

And not only so, but they had already been much distinguished by God. These two had been expressly permitted by name to go with their father to Mount Sinai, when God was about to deliver the law to him. They were admitted nearer than the rest of the congregation ; they had a glorious manifestation of the Lord : we read in Exodus, the twenty-fourth chapter and ninth verse, “ Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel : and they saw the God of Israel : and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.” What a privilege was this which these young men had enjoyed ! How abiding a sense of the majesty of God should it have impressed upon them !

But besides this, they had just been consecrated, along with their two younger brothers, Eleazar and Ithamar, to be the priests of the Lord, while their father had been exalted to the dignity of high priest, to which office Nadab, as the first-born, might look forward to succeed. They had just been assisting

him and Moses in the offering of the sacrifices for themselves and the people, as we saw in the last sermon ; they had heard the solemn blessing pronounced ; they had seen the glory of the Lord as it appeared to all the people ; they had beheld the fire come out from before the Lord, and consume the offerings which had been placed upon the altar ; they had heard the people shout for joy, and seen them prostrate themselves before the Lord in the deepest reverence. How much more should *they* have been filled with all devout emotions ! How intensely fixed should *their* minds have been on the greatness of God, and of his peculiar grace to *them* ! How spiritual and holy should have been the joy which filled *their* hearts upon that interesting occasion, full of such distinguishing honour to them ! And how profound should have been their humility under a sense of their own insufficiency for the great office to which they had now been called ! With all such feelings surely their hearts should have been entirely occupied ! These then were the men, such their office,

such the things which they had seen and heard, upon whom this great judgment of the Lord was executed.

II. Let us now enquire, in the second place, what was the sin which they had committed. It evidently consisted in a hasty, unbidden entrance on their office, with great irregularity in their performance of a part of it, especially in one particular. We are to remember that the dispensation in which they were appointed to officiate was such that every thing in it was minutely specified, and all was to be done according to the directions given and the pattern shewn to Moses in the mount. Now these young men, without waiting for instructions from Moses and Aaron respecting their duties, and the proper time and mode of performing them, rashly took their office at once upon themselves, hastily seized their censers, and prematurely attempted to offer incense unto the Lord. But, as I observed, there was one particular in which their sin seems to have principally consisted: it is said they “offered strange fire:” that is, they took and used common fire, not

that which had fallen from heaven, and was burning on the altar of burnt-offering, which alone was to be used. They took some other, “which he commanded them not.” In that was their sin. Now some, who have erroneous views of the character of God and his law, may think that this was a light sin, and that the punishment was beyond the proportion of the offence. Such, no doubt, would also think that the sin of Adam and Eve, in only eating of the fruit of a tree, was a light sin. So the sin of Saul, when he transgressed the commandment of the Lord, seemed in his own eyes, to be a light sin, or even no sin at all. But all these had in them a heinous offence, a disobedience of God’s command, and contempt of his authority.—Moreover we cannot help fearing that these sins of Nadab and Abihu were caused or increased by their being heated with wine. We see no other reason for the caution so immediately given to Aaron in the ninth verse, “Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest

ye die : it shall be a statute for you throughout your generations." If this were the case, you see the mischiefs which flow from the sin of intemperance, which renders a man fit for the commission of every kind of impiety and wickedness, takes away his senses, and plunges him headlong into sin.

But be this as it may, directions had been expressly and minutely given to them by Moses, as he had himself received them from God, and they ought to have been simply and humbly obeyed. Such obedience is required of us. We have the canon of scripture. This is our rule ; and we are neither to add to it, nor diminish from it. The danger is ever the greatest that we do not come up to its full requirements ; and that we are deficient in faith, or make many omissions in practice. But there is also danger lest we overstep the bounds prescribed by scripture. This has often been done through an over-heated zeal, and perhaps most frequently in cases somewhat similar to this which we have been considering, by persons rashly and impetuously seeking or

executing the office of the ministry. In this way many have run without being sent. Some have done this through a most culpable negligence of that high and holy office. Some have erred thus through a mistaken and ill-directed enthusiasm ; others again from a wilder irregularity of mind and obstinacy of self-will ; and others from a vain overweening opinion of their own piety and talents, and an unjustifiable contempt of all authority. All these things are of that “ strange fire,” with which God will not be served. May he fill all his servants with a zeal tempered by knowledge, and cause their “ love to abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.”

III. Let us consider, in the third place, the judgment inflicted upon them. It was severe and terrible. “ There went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” They had sinned by fire, and they perished by fire. How different are the purposes to which fire from the Lord may be applied ! God had just made use of it as a token of his approbation and

acceptance of their offerings, now he makes it an instrument of destruction to those who had offended against him. Thus the same circumstance in Providence is a blessing to one, and a punishment to another, and the gospel itself is a savour of life to some, and a savour of death to others.

What a panic would this awful visitation strike into the whole assembly! What a solemn warning would it afford to every one who beheld it! Perhaps we think that if such visible and instantaneous displays of God's indignation against sin were made more frequently, there would be less of it. But alas the history of this people shews how soon they forgot both these judgments and mercies. And if such baring of his right hand, and such launching of his thunderbolts, are not so frequent in our age, what irreverence, forgetfulness, and ingratitude does it shew, if we pervert this forbearance into an encouragement to sin! Thus the Apostle expostulates, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth

thee to repentance ! But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ?” The judgment revealed in that day will indeed be a righteous judgment. Creation will cry at its execution, “ Righteous art thou O Lord, because thou hast judged thus.” But this is a day of grace, and still his mercy waits. May the blessed Spirit lead you to come unto God in a right manner, that you may find mercy and acceptance with him before it be too late.

IV. I will state to you, in the fourth place, the reason assigned by Moses for this severe judgment. We read, “ Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” The meaning is that God will have a holy awe and reverence of his divine majesty on the mind of all, and more especially of his priests, whenever they draw near to him in any act of solemn worship. He will not be approached with disrespect or

familiarity ; he will not have the mind light and trifling on an entrance into his house ; he will be feared and honoured by all his worshippers, as the Psalmist says, “ God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him.” But this reverence of God must be on our minds on *all* occasions, and we must sanctify the Lord in *every* circumstance. We have already seen, in a former sermon, that it was this particular failure which God punished so severely in Moses and Aaron, when they disobeyed his word in smiting the rock, and did that which he commanded them not. Though he did not break out upon them and kill them, though he did not even withhold the water from the people, yet he said unto them, “ Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” Thus we see that he will be honoured by such a regard to his word as shall neither overstep it, nor fall short of it : he will be implicitly believed and obeyed : he

will not bear with those who go beyond his commandment any more than with those who omit to do it: and if men do not glorify him by their obedience, he will glorify himself by his own judgments. Let us learn then to feel this profound reverence of him, and render him this undeviating obedience, that we may in all things, as we read in the prophet Isaiah, "Sanctify his name and sanctify the holy one of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel." He declares by the prophet Ezekiel, when he is threatening some most terrible judgments upon a predicted mighty enemy of his church; when he threatens, "I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone;" then he adds, "Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord." This use of the word "Sanctify" is also made by the Apostle Peter, quoting Isaiah, when he is warning

those to whom he 'wrote not to shrink from bearing their testimony to the Lord through fear of the persecution of men. He says, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but *sanctify* the Lord God in your hearts;" that is, entertain so deep a sense of his authority, power, and grace, and of your own duty and obligations, as to overpower every regard which you might otherwise feel to the threats of men.

V. But it is time that we go, in the fifth place, to consider the spirit of Aaron under this severe trial from the death of his sons. It is described in one short, but very emphatic sentence, "Aaron held his peace." His breast must have been torn with various distressing feelings. Consternation, horror, and grief, must all have laid hold on him. These were his two eldest sons; he had just been made happy by the distinguished honour which had been put upon them; he sees them struck dead in an instant; he feels himself dishonoured before the people by their punishment. We who know what angry feelings are ready to rise in our minds, and what hasty

and passionate complaints rush to our lips in such trials, may well conceive that he might be ready to accuse God of cruelty or injustice, and to speak unadvisedly with his lips. But "Aaron held his peace." He uttered no expression of wrath, or sullen discontent. The consideration urged by Moses prevented him from charging God foolishly. He became dumb, and opened not his mouth, for it was his doing. He heard the rod and who had appointed it. He meekly received the punishment of his sons' iniquity. Thus he exhibited a beautiful pattern of submission. The aged Eli, in a similar trial, shewed the same spirit. His two sons were also cut off in one day for their irreverence and profaneness in the manner in which they executed the priest's office, in taking the fat, and other parts of the flesh, which he commanded them not, and for other grievous sins of which they were guilty, so that "the sin of the young men was great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Their punishment had been foretold to Eli by a man of God; it had been repeated to

him by Samuel, who, when yet but a child, had received it by direct communication from God. The aged priest, for Eli also was the high priest in regular descent from Aaron, did not indeed hold his peace like his great ancestor; perhaps he did better, he spake, but they were the words of the deepest resignation, "It is the Lord," he said, "let him do what seemeth him good."—In the case of holy Job we see this matter carried still further. Intelligence was brought him from different quarters of the destruction of his property, one messenger after another announcing to him in rapid succession that his oxen and asses, his sheep and camels were all carried off by enemies, or destroyed by fire from heaven, and his servants slain with the sword; and the measure of suffering seemed to be filled up, when immediately after these disastrous tidings he was further informed that by one dreadful blow all his children were killed at once by the fall of their eldest brother's house upon them. In these most distressing circumstances we read of him, "Then Job arose, and rent his

mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down before the Lord and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." These are all excellent examples of suffering patience. Aaron holds his peace; Eli expresses his entire resignation; Job blesses the name of the Lord.

May God enable us to imitate the highest of these examples. But if we cannot rise so high as to bless God in our afflictions, then let us endeavour to declare ourselves ready meekly to lie under his hand while he doeth what seemeth him good. Or if this be beyond our faith and strength let us at the least hold our peace, not in sullen discontent, but in patient suffering of his will. We must look for sufferings; they are the lot of humanity; they are the necessary accompaniments of sin. And why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Surely we may rather feel, that it is of the Lord's mercies

that we are not utterly consumed. But affliction and trials are something else besides being the lot of humanity, and the consequences of sin ; they are needful corrections and salutary chastisements ; the Lord chastens us for our profit. Thus it is good for us to be afflicted ; and hence we may say under all our afflictions, and if we see them in a proper light we shall say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

One thing more must be noticed in the spirit and conduct of Aaron. The goat which had been sacrificed for the sin-offering of the people, had not been eaten as it ought to have been, but had been burnt. This was contrary to appointed order, as its blood had not been carried into the holy place. Here was another irregularity for which Moses reproved Eleazar and Ithamar, the remaining sons of Aaron. Their father answered for them, “Behold this day have they offered their sin-offering and their burnt-offering before the Lord ; and such things have befallen me : and if I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the

Lord?" He means, I think, that his sons had offered the sacrifices in due order in all other respects. He takes the fault of this offence against order upon himself; and perhaps he had directed them to burn it. He intimates that such a heavy affliction had befallen him that he could not eat with proper cheerfulness and thankfulness. He expresses his belief that if he had felt no grief and shewn no signs of humiliation, God would not have been pleased with him, and his taking food would not have been acceptable in his sight. I think that such is the import of Aaron's answer, and we read that Moses "was content." We conclude that the Lord also accepted the reason assigned, and mercifully regarded the agitated state of the natural feelings of Aaron and his sons. For our God is very pitiful, and of tender mercy, and will not break the bruised reed.

Let me here in conclusion warn you, my beloved brethren, of a fault into which some fall in their earthly sorrows and losses. They desert the house and ordinances of the Lord. Instead of being more exact in the fulfilment

of their religious duties and services, they omit them the more, perhaps altogether, and pretend that their minds are so distressed, that they cannot go up to the house of the Lord or attend at his sacramental table. These things ought not to be so. No, my suffering friends, let every earthly affliction lead you nearer to God, make you more attentive to all parts of your service to him, and teach you to seek your comfort in the ordinances of his house. Oh! never sit at home brooding over your bereavements, or whatever other cause may fill your hearts with grief, but go to the holy house of God, and there shew your submission and love. Go to that house of which he has said, "In this place will I give peace." There, my brethren, yes there, in the obedient fulfilment of every duty to God, you will be "accepted in his sight," obtain also the testimony of an approving conscience, and find your sorrows soothed, and your burdens lightened.

SERMON X.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE LEPER.

LEVIT. XIII. 45, 46.

And the Leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled ; he is unclean : he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall his habitation be.

WE have seen much of the various offerings which the Jews under the law had to bring to make atonement for their sins, whereby the *ceremonial guilt* which they had contracted might be forgiven them. And in these things the gospel was preached unto them, and some shadowy intimations given them of the means by which their *moral guilt* might be put away.

But another great truth had to be exhibited to them. There is such a thing as natural depravity and inherent corruption, an infection deeply seated in the very constitution of man, brought with him into the world at his birth, and breaking out upon him in various moral defilements. How was this great truth, which is so clearly revealed to us, which is so necessary to be both known and felt by all, and which, when known and felt, brings men so directly to Christ, how, I ask, was this great leading truth of the gospel shadowed forth unto the Jews in their preparatory state? It was conveyed to them, indistinctly indeed, but yet most aptly, as it now appears to us who see it by the light of the gospel, by that multiplicity of enactments, under which God placed them, by which they would contract *ceremonial uncleanness*. From natural causes, by bodily diseases, by the touch of various things and animals, they were continually becoming ceremonially unclean. The thoughtful Jew could not help perceiving how frequently he became defiled by some one or other of these circumstances ;

he would necessarily suffer great inconvenience from the laws which related to them ; and would feel great pain of mind at being banished so repeatedly from God and his ordinances. Now this was the method which God in his wisdom took to intimate to them, in that preparatory dispensation, the universal defilement of the human race, which is set forth so plainly in the gospel. And while this truth thus obscurely shone upon them, the other great truths of the gospel connected with it were at the same time shadowed forth, namely, the necessity of being both cleansed and sanctified, with the methods by which both cleansing and sanctification might be obtained. The requirement of God by these laws is expressed in the eleventh chapter, the forty-fourth and forty-fifth verses, “ I am the Lord your God : ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy ; for I am holy.” But they were necessarily often defiled, and made ceremonially unholy ; and then the Lord shewed them that atonement must be made by sacrifice, and that they must be purified by blood, and sanctified by

oil. Now what does the Lord require of us but that we should be holy? And inasmuch as we are not holy, but defiled by sin, we also are required to bring a sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ, we are also to be purified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit.

It is not my intention to discuss all the various ways by which the Jews might become ceremonially unclean, nor the minute differences in the manner of their purification. It seems sufficient for my purpose of expounding these books of Moses to you to take the case of leprosy alone. This will furnish us with all the great features of ceremonial defilement, and of the laws relating to its purification.

The leprosy was a most extraordinary disease, and the kind of it with which the Jews were afflicted, was peculiar to that nation. It was often, some think always, judicially inflicted as a punishment from God for some particular and grievous sin, of which Miriam, Ussiah, and Gehazi, are striking and well-known instances. It was often found in garments of woollen or linen, and also in their

houses, after they were established in the land of Canaan ; in these cases it was evidently “put upon” them by the Lord, and not produced by any natural causes. It does not appear that it was infectious, but strictly confined to the person or thing to which God had sent it. It was painful to the sufferer, and loathsome in the sight of others. During the time that any person was afflicted with it, he was banished from all intercourse with his friends and fellow-men. He must live alone, or with lepers like himself, and was not permitted to come to the sanctuary of God, or partake of any of the ordinances of religion. Thus Uzziah, though a king, was driven out of the temple, and compelled to live in a separate house by himself all the days of his life, the leprosy, which was inflicted as the punishment of his sin, being never removed from him.

Now this disease, and the condition to which he, who was afflicted by it, was reduced by the law, formed a striking representation of that universal depravity and natural corruption with which our souls are

overspread. 'This has rendered us odious in the sight of God; it has separated between us and him, and driven us "far off" into banishment from his presence and favour, and if we be not cleansed from it in the appointed way, we can never have an entrance into his heavenly temple. So long as this leprosy of sin remains untaken away, the soul lies under all its guilt and punishment: in the language of the text as applied to it, "All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall his habitation be." The unpurified and unrenewed sinner is thus morally unclean, and has no spiritual health in him; he has also no participation whatever in the privileges and blessings of the people of God; he is without God and without Christ in the world.

• Such should be our view of the misery of being in a natural state of sin; such was the view to which the Jews might have been led by that ceremonial defilement to which they were continually subjected by the leprosy, and by so many other circumstances, and to

which, no doubt, all the pious among them were led by the internal teaching of the Holy Spirit.

The manner in which the Jew was taught to *feel* and *lament* his ceremonial uncleanness is also a strong illustration of the manner in which we should feel and bewail the corruption of our nature. In the first verse of the text we read, “ And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.” Here were all the usual and strong indications of horror, grief, and shame. The clothes were to be rent, a well-known expression of all these feelings; the head was to be uncovered, another token of deep mourning; the upper lip was to have a covering put upon it, which was a further token of self-abasement, as we see in the prophets Ezekiel and Micah, and indicated that he must not open his mouth for shame; and confession of his miserable condition was to be made by the humbling cry, “ unclean, unclean.” Who does not see in all this the feelings and acts

of a penitent under the gospel when convinced of sin? Does not he feel all this grief and shame? Does not he express it by outward tokens? Does not he acknowledge himself a miserable and polluted sinner? If *we* be made truly sensible of our own sinful condition, we shall rend our hearts, and not our garments; we shall lay our souls bare before the heart-searching God; our mouths will be stopped, for we shall know ourselves to be guilty; we shall smite, each one upon our breast, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Before we proceed to the method of its purification, it is worth our notice to see how it was to be discovered. As soon as any one was suspected of having the leprosy he was to be brought to the priest, who was carefully to examine the disease, and pronounce upon it. If this could not be done at once, more time was to be taken till the fact became evident. What does this show to us, but that we must take every means of discovering the plague spot of our own hearts? We must not be afraid of knowing the worst. We

must go to God who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, and cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:" and we must also go to the word and the ministers of the word, that by their help we may know all the evil that is in us. Many are most backward in this. They would not only cloak their sin from others, but hide it as much as possible from their own eyes: they would willingly be self-deceivers in this all-important point, and think better of themselves than they ought to think. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. We should desire to be searched thoroughly, and to know the true nature, and also the whole of our disease. For as "they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," so shall we never desire and apply to be cleansed from sin, except we are first shown how dreadfully we are infected with it. And we should wait on God, and the teaching of his ministers, until we become fully acquainted with the true state of the case.

And now I proceed to set before you the

method in which God was pleased to effect the purification of the leper, and to purge away their other ceremonial uncleannesses. Several particulars require our notice. These are described in the following chapter. In the first place, as soon as it appeared to the priest that the leper was healed, two living birds were to be taken, one of which was to be killed over spring water in an earthen vessel, and the blood suffered to fall into the water. The other bird was to be taken, with cedar wood, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and all together were to be dipped in the blood and water in the vessel. With these the priest was to sprinkle the person to be purified seven times, and then to let the living bird loose into the open field. This was the first part of the ceremony. Next, the person to be cleansed was to wash his clothes, and shave off all the hair of his body, and wash himself in water, and after the interval of seven days he was to repeat this washing and shaving. This was the second part of the ceremony. Then he was to take two he-lambs, the one for a trespass-offering,

and the other for a burnt-offering, and one ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, and also three tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat-offering, with the addition of one log, that is, about half a pint, of oil. The sin-offering was presented on account of the sin which had exposed him to this disease, the burnt-offering, with its meat-offering as an acknowledgment of God's mercy, and an expression of his renewed dedication of himself to the Lord's service, and the trespass-offering for any deviations from the ritual law into which he might have fallen during the time of his confinement under the leprosy. The ceremonies that accompanied the offering of the trespass-offering were peculiar in this case and much resembled those which were to be observed in the consecration of the priests. The priest was to take some of the blood of the trespass-offering, and put it on the right ear of him that was to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot. He was then to pour part of the log of oil into the palm of his own left

hand, and with the finger of his right hand to sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord, some more of it he was to put on the ear, thumb, and toe of the person to be cleansed, as he had done the blood, and the remainder of that which was in his hand he was to pour upon the head. This being done the priest was to offer the sin-offering and make an atonement for him ; and then to offer the burnt-offering and the meat-offering upon the altar, and make an atonement for him, and he should be clean.

Now these ceremonies were all typical of the manner in which the Lord Jesus, our great high priest, cleanses us from all our sins, and from that corruption of our nature by which we are defiled and separated from God. And here, in the first place, a very remarkable difference is to be observed which marks the vast superiority of the Lord over the high priest of the Jews, and at once intimates to us plainly who and what he was. The Jewish high priest, being a mere man, and himself compassed with infirmity, could

not *heal* the leper, he could only *discover* by inspection when he was already healed by God, and then by his office *declare* this to the people, and perform the ceremonies appointed for his cleansing, that he might be again restored to society, and the public worship and ordinances of the house of the Lord. But the Lord Jesus, as you will see from every part of the New Testament where lepers are met with, *heals* the leper. Look at St. Matthew's gospel, the eighth chapter and the second verse, and at St. Mark's gospel, the first chapter and fortieth verse, and at St. Luke's gospel, the fifth chapter and twelfth verse, which all give this account. A leper came to Jesus and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if *thou wilt* thou *canst* make me clean, and Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him and said, *I will, be* thou clean ; and immediately his leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And then the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto

them. Again, in the gospel of St. Luke, the seventeenth chapter and twelfth verse, we read that there met the Lord ten men which were lepers, who stood afar off, because under this affliction they might not come near to any; and they cried to him to have mercy on them; and he said to them, go shew yourselves to the priests, and it came to pass that as they went they were *cleansed*. And one of them when he saw that he was *healed* turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. Now here we see that the Lord Jesus took upon himself what was exclusively the act of God under the Old Testament, namely, the act of healing and removing the leprosy; and this he did rightly, because he was God. And he sent them to the priests to offer the things which Moses had commanded, because as yet the sacrifice of himself had not been offered, which was to annul, and stand in the place of, all these sacrifices of the law.

Now, in the next place, I will shew you how that great sacrifice of himself, after it was offered up, became a perfect expiation

and atonement for all sin, actual and original, and how it was set forth to the Jews under these shadowy representations of cleansing from the leprosy and other ceremonial uncleannesses.

Here was first the sprinkling of the mixture of blood and water seven times upon the person of him who was to be cleansed. This necessarily reminds us of the text in the first Epistle of St. John, the fifth chapter and sixth verse, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." The sprinkling seven times was to denote, seven being a perfect number, the perfect cleansing thus obtained; and the sevenfold repetition of the action intimates what David expresses in his prayer, wash me *thoroughly* from my iniquity, and what we learn from the gospel, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from *all* sin. In allusion to the use of the hyssop David also prays, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Then the living bird was to be suffered to fly away into the open field, a part of the ceremony which I need

not notice now, as I shall have to say more upon a similar circumstance in the next sermon. Then followed the washing and shaving of the whole body two separate times with the interval of seven days between. This shews us that we must put away our sins and iniquities, and all our moral defilement and guilt. We must wash in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness ; if we have made any application of the blood of Christ by faith to our consciences, we must take care to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to purge ourselves from our old sins, and to purify ourselves, even as he is pure. And this must be done again and again, for the infection of nature still remains even in those who are regenerate, and we have need to be daily washing in Christ that we may be clean.

The offerings to be presented remind us continually of the indispensable necessity of that great sacrifice which Jesus offered in his own body on the cross, to make atonement for us. This essential truth of the gospel is exhibited to us upon every occasion, and in

every possible form. As we comment on the Jewish laws and ceremonies we can never help observing how perpetually it recurs. And well it may, for it is the great essential truth of the gospel, that on which more stress is laid than any other, that which has the most decided influence upon the manner in which we shall view and hold all the rest. Here again is great use of the *blood* of the trespass-offering, some of which was to be applied to all the principal extremities of the body, shewing, along with the sprinkling of the blood and water, that the whole man is defiled, and that every part must be cleansed; and as the oil was to be applied in the same manner, and some of it put also upon the head, this shews that the grace of Christ is needed, (for oil is the emblem of his grace,) for our sanctification. By these united ceremonies we are taught what is so beautifully expressed in the Apostle's prayer; may "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole Spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

These ceremonies of the law being duly observed, the Jew was restored to the house and ordinances of God. The blood and spirit of Christ being rightly applied by us we shall be restored to spiritual intercourse and communion with him. "Such," saith the Apostle to the Corinthians, "were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Let us then all seek to be justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and to be anointed with the unction from that holy one. Let us all seek, for we all need, the removal of the loathsome disease of sin from our souls, and the blessed gift of purity in spirit and life. Oh! may the Holy Ghost bestow these mercies upon us through our divine advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ.

SERMON XI.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

LEVIT. XVI. 34.

And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.

THIS chapter, which closes with the verse I have read to you, contains an account of the annual Day of Atonement, and of the ceremonies with which it was to be observed. This was one of the most important and interesting days in the whole Jewish calendar. It is deserving of the closest attention, for it sets forth most of the great peculiarities of the gospel in a very striking light.

I will describe to you, on the first head of this sermon, the circumstances peculiar to the day, and, on the second, the ceremonies with which it was to be observed. And then

I will conclude with an application of them to the truths of the gospel.

I. 1. On the first head I observe, in the first place, that this was the only day in the whole year on which the high priest was permitted to enter into the most holy place of the tabernacle. We read in the second verse, “And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not.” The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, notices this circumstance, and shews what it intimated, he says, “The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and the errors of the people : the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” The ninth and tenth chapters of that epistle enter into a consideration of all the most remarkable ceremonies of this

great annual solemnity, and shew us how we are to view them as connected with the richer mercies and superior grace of the gospel. Several of these I shall notice to you as I proceed.

2. I observe, in the second place, that the object of the appointment of this day was, that a general atonement might be made upon it for *all* the sins of the people. It was, as the text says, "to make an atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year," as is also expressed in the thirtieth verse, "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from *all* your sins before the Lord." This was therefore to be an annual atonement for all their iniquities, transgressions, and sins, committed during the year. If it was duly observed, the Jews had an actual remission of all the temporal punishments to which they had become exposed, the guilt contracted by their omissions of any ceremonial observancies was pardoned and removed, and the condemnation deserved by their moral offences was taken away

from all such of them as had grace given them to look forward by faith to that great and powerful atonement which was thus prefigured.

3. I observe, in the third place, that this was a day for repentance, a great national fast and day of humiliation. It was to be kept for this purpose, as a sabbath by a rest from all manner of work. We read, "It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls by a statute for ever." In the Acts of the Apostles it is emphatically called, "The Fast," for when St. Luke says that sailing was dangerous "because the fast was already past," he alludes to this particular day. They were all to occupy themselves entirely with deep humiliation and sincere contrition and humble confession, separating and consecrating the day altogether to penitential acts and acknowledgments of their offences.

4. In the fourth place the dress in which the high priest was to officiate and his ablutions are to be noticed. He was not to wear his rich habiliments, his golden robes as the

Jews called them, but only his plain white linen vestments. This was ordered in conformity with the object of the day, and the feelings which ought to be awakened upon it. The whole service being intended as a recognition and confession of sin, with sacrifices of atonement for it, the high priest was thus to humble and abase himself before God. He was also to wash himself repeatedly with water, and was thereby taught how defiling was the nature of sin, and how it came upon him even in the performance of his most penitent and holiest duties. It shews us that our very repentances need to be washed in the blood of Jesus ; and plainly pointed out to the Jews, as it does to us, the purity and holiness of that God to whom we approach in our religious services.

5. I observe, in the fifth and last place of this first head of my sermon, that in all this part of the day's service the high priest was to officiate *alone*, as we see in the seventeenth verse. So we well know that the whole work of atonement for our sins was performed by Christ alone. No one aided or

assisted him ; no one participated with him ; he bore all our sufferings ; to him all the glory is due. He trod that wine-press of the wrath of God alone ; and of the people there was none with him ; his own arm brought salvation : “ by himself he purged our sins ; ” “ he his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree.” Blessed Jesus, we owe the whole of our salvation to thee. To thee be all our praise and all our service given.

II. Let us now go to our second head, and consider the ceremonies with which the day was to be observed.

1. In the first place the high priest was to take a young bullock as a sin-offering, and a ram as a burnt-offering for himself. Now, as I formerly observed, this strongly intimated that their high priest, distinguished and honoured as he was, was but a poor transgressor and sinner as were the rest of the people. The apostle notes this circumstance in his epistle to the Hebrews, observing that the law made men high priests, which had infirmity, and that he went in with blood, which he offered for *himself* and the errors of

the people. He was also to have from the people two kids of the goats, one of which selected by lot, was to be killed as a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering. There was no approach to the Lord, either for priest or people, without a sacrifice. They might afflict their souls, and confess their sins, but there must always be a sacrifice. It was uniformly the sacrifice which made the atonement. So the sacrifice of Christ is every thing to us. Whatever else we do will be of no avail without this. We may mourn for our sins, we may offer costly oblations, we may abound in deeds of benevolence and charity, but the one thing needful is a living faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Without this all else is unacceptable and in vain.

2. In the second place I observe that when Aaron had killed the bullock which was a sin-offering for himself, and made an atonement for himself and for his house, he was to take incense and burning coals, and to enter with these into the holy of holies, and there put the incense on the coals, that

the cloud arising from the burning of it might cover the mercy-seat. Then he was to fetch some of the blood of his sin-offering, and sprinkle some of it *upon* the mercy-seat, and some of it seven times *before* the mercy-seat. How well does all this set forth the reverence due to God, the necessity of propitiating him, and the infinite importance of that blood, which is emphatically called the blood of sprinkling.

3. In the third place, Aaron was then to kill the goat appointed to be the sin-offering for the people, and to take its blood within the veil, and sprinkle it in like manner; for whatever is necessary for one of the sinful race of men is necessary for others. And with these ceremonies he made atonement for the holy place; and so he was to do for the whole tabernacle, and so also for the altar of incense, and to put the blood of the bullock and the goat on the horns of the altar, and to sprinkle the blood upon it with his finger seven times. There cannot possibly be a stronger representation of the sinful nature of man. Though the high priest alone

entered into the holy of holies, yet it thereby became defiled, and must be purified from the uncleanness contracted by its contact with man; and in like manner the tabernacle and the altar must be purified and hallowed from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. How plainly does God thus teach us the holiness of his nature, and how jealous he is of it! How plainly does he shew that we are all defiled and defiling! How manifestly does he set forth our need of a purification by blood, even the blood of the Lamb slain to take away sin. It will be well indeed if these things give us any more clear and convincing views of sin, and of the manner in which we must have it removed. We may here see that it cleaves to us even in the services of the house of God, and that it pollutes every thing which the sinner touches. Oh! that all this may lead us to a more complete application of the blood of Christ to our own consciences.

4. I now observe, in the fourth place, that after Aaron had killed the sin-offering for himself and his house, and the sin-offering

for the people, and had “made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, another and very particular part of the day’s service commenced. The other goat, which was reserved alive by the lot, was brought forth. This was called the scape-goat. We read respecting it in the twenty-first and twenty-second verses, “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.” The case of the living bird let fly into the open heaven, in the purification of the leper, while the other bird was killed, and its blood mixed with water was sprinkled upon the leper, is in some respects similar to the case of these two goats, but here the ceremony is much fuller. And scarcely is it possible that any thing

could more distinctly represent the whole method of the removing of our sins from us, as that is done by the blessed Jesus.

5. In the fifth and last place I observe that this being done the high priest no longer wore his plain and humble garments. The penitential part of the day's service being ended, and the goat sent away with their sins upon it into the wilderness, he was to put off his linen raiment, and leave it in the holy place, and assume his rich and splendid dress ; and yet, in order that we may still see the defiling nature of sin, he was again to wash his flesh as being rendered unclean by putting the sins of the people upon the scape-goat ; so also had the man who took it into the wilderness, and there let it go, and his clothes also, and the other also, who carried away the burnt-offerings without the camp, and burned them there, was in like manner to wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water.

And now, my brethren, having thus described to you the peculiar circumstances and ceremonies belonging to this great day

of the Jews' religion, let me endeavour to apply them to ourselves.

1. First, sin must be confessed by us. See the high priest confessing all the sins of himself and the people over the head of the scape-goat. No form of words is here prescribed, but the Jews adopted one in after ages which was not unsuitable for the purpose. It was this. 'O Lord, thy people, the house of Israel, have sinned and done iniquity, and trespassed before thee: O Lord, make atonement now for the sins, and for the iniquities, and for the trespasses that thy people the house of Israel have sinned, and unrighteously done, and trespassed before thee.' Thus in coming to Christ and his sacrifice we must confess all *our* sins. We must endeavour to recollect, and we must acknowledge all our numerous sins, iniquities, and transgressions, and humble ourselves before him for them. This is an indispensable part of true repentance, which God requires of all men every where. The penitent Psalmist says, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid." The proverb tells

us that "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." One Apostle declares that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" and another warns us that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thus then, in seeking reconciliation with God through Christ we must confess our sins. In our chambers and on our knees we must penitently acknowledge all our iniquities and transgressions. Also whenever the church assembles in public worship confession of sin must be one of her first and principal duties. This appears in every part of our book of common prayer, where confession of sin is expressed in language most humble and affecting.

2. Secondly, sin must be transferred. See the high priest laying both his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, confessing

over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, and *putting them upon the head* of the goat. What a striking representation is this of the manner in which our sins are put upon Christ! What a bright illustration of that which the prophet Isaiah says of him, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all," and again, "He shall bear our iniquities." How strongly is this truth expressed in various passages of the New Testament! Thus in Hebrews, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" and in the second of Corinthians, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," where, as I have observed in a former sermon, there is a double transfer declared, the one, of our sins to Christ, and the other, of his righteousness to us. Now to put our sins on Christ is the office of faith. So that here are set forth to us the two great doctrines of the gospel, "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh! how large is his

grace and how extensive the work which he has sustained for us ! One goat slain could only shew us a sacrificed Saviour, it could not shew us a living Saviour. One could not exhibit him who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore. There must be two to convey this truth that Christ was “ put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,” that he was “ delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification,” that “ he was crucified through weakness, and yet liveth by the power of God.” Oh ! let us fix our faith on these glorious truths of his gospel, and cast all our sins, with all our fears and cares, upon him.

3. Thus, thirdly, sin will be removed. Here see the scape-goat sent away into the wilderness, bearing upon him all the iniquities of the people, into a land not inhabited, or, as it is in the margin of our bibles, into a land of separation : see him thus taken far away, and there set at liberty. Now although all this could not make them perfect as pertaining to the conscience, though it was but

a type and shadow to them, yet how clear is it to us! How plainly do we here see “the Lamb of God which *taketh away* the sins of the world!” And with what full assurance of faith may we believe in the remission of our sins through him. Do but consider the weight of testimony which is presented to us by the scriptures on this head. They describe the removal of the sins of believers as the dispersion of a cloud; “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins.” They describe them as removed to the greatest possible distance; “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” They describe the Lord God as never mentioning them against them, nay, as blotting them out of his own remembrance. They say that if sought for they shall not be found, and that God will “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” Surely I need not add additional testimonies from the New Testament. Numbers must be familiar to you. May God apply them to every mourning believing penitent for the comfort of his soul.

Thus, brethren, we have seen how the deliverance of our souls from sin by Christ crucified is typified by the goat that was killed; how the acceptance of his sacrifice, his making atonement, and his entering into heaven for us, are typified by the high priest's entrance into the most holy place; and how the removal of all our sins is typified by the scape-goat bearing away the iniquities of the whole congregation of Israel. This pardon, so rich, so full, so free, is to be penitently and earnestly desired by us, and obtained, by our application of the atonement of Christ to ourselves through faith. Oh! that we may truly repent of our sins, and sprinkle the blood of Christ on our hearts by faith! Then, like the Jewish high priest changing his raiment, we may take "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Oh! yes, then, like the Ethiopian eunuch after his baptism, we may go on our way rejoicing.

This subject may administer strong reproof to those who are self-righteous, and think

that they have no sin, and need no atonement. Here, as in a glass, they may see the number and greatness of their sins, the duty of repentance, the indispensable necessity of an atoning sacrifice, and the act of faith putting our sins on Christ for their removal. How impossible must it be that sin can be removed in any other way! All scripture testifies to the utter hopelessness of any other means of pardon or method of peace. How vain must it be for any one to go about to establish his own righteousness instead of submitting himself to the righteousness of God!

Full of consolation is this subject to all those who are weary and heavy-laden with the burden of sin. Here they see him, who is mighty to save, making expiation for them, and taking their sins upon himself. Who then is he that condemneth? Here is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, and ever liveth to make intercession. Oh! my fearful, sorrowing, desponding brother, "cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee." Yea, lay even the curse which

the law pronounces against your transgressions upon him, for "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." Oh! "come unto him, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and he will give you rest." My sorrow-stricken people, stricken with sorrow because stricken by the sword of the spirit convincing of sin, Oh! "look unto him and be ye saved, for he is God and there is none else." Look unto him who hung upon the cross, and think of that purpose of mercy for which his sacred limbs were stretched upon it. Believe in that sacrifice, and so shall you partake of his atonement. Hear the apostle Paul, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Oh! then, though you too may esteem yourselves chief of sinners, yet believe in him who "came to save sinners," and doubt not of obtaining mercy.

SERMON XII.

THE ANNUAL FEASTS.

LEVIT. XXIII. 37.

These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering, and sacrifice, and drink-offerings, every thing upon his day.

THIS chapter contains an account of all the great *annual* solemnities which were appointed to the Jews for their observation. I shall consider them in their order, and apply each of them to our own circumstances as we proceed.

1. The first of these was the Passover. It was kept on the fourteenth day of the first month, the first month of the Jews answering to the latter part of March and the former

part of April of our time. On the day following began the feast of unleavened bread, of which kind alone the Jews were enjoined to eat for seven days, the first and the seventh day being holy convocations, to be observed as Sabbaths, and no servile work was to be done thereon. Hence this feast was indifferently called, the feast of the Passover, or the feast of unleavened bread, as we read in the first verse of the twenty-second of St. Luke's gospel, "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover." This feast, as far as respects the eating of the paschal Lamb and the unleavened bread, we have already considered when expounding the book of Exodus to you; but there is another part of it, not referred to there, which we have now to notice, namely, the bringing of the first-fruits of the barley harvest. This part of the solemnity was only to commence after their establishment in the land of Canaan, for then only could it be observed. It consisted in their reaping a sheaf, which was to be dried and threshed, and the corn ground, and presented to the

Lord in the name and on the behalf of the whole nation. They were not to eat any of the year's production of that grain, until they had thus offered the first unto the Lord. The flour so presented was to be waved by the priest in the manner that the breast of the peace-offering was waved. They were also to offer a he-lamb of the first year, and without blemish, as a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering, consisting of two tenth-deals of fine flour mingled with oil; and with it a drink-offering of the fourth part of a hin of wine, that is, about two pints and a half.

Now this was a grateful acknowledgment of God's mercy to them in making the corn to grow, and in thus beginning to provide bread for them through the year, and by this they sought a blessing and a sanctified use of all the remainder. And surely every grateful heart will desire to render again unto the Lord for all the mercies which have been received from him, and to devote something from his earthly bounties to his honour and service according as he has been pleased to bestow them.

Now in applying this ceremony to our own circumstances I may well observe that we have cause to remember this day of the first-fruits of barley harvest on a special account most interesting to us. It was as on this day that the blessed Jesus rose from the dead. He was crucified on the day on which the Passover supper was celebrated, the next day, the first of the feast of unleavened bread, itself a holy convocation and to be kept as a sabbath, fell at that time on the regular weekly Jewish sabbath, so that *that* sabbath day was, as St. John says, a high day; and on the day following, the first day of the week, which was the appointed day of the first-fruits, Jesus quitted his temporary prison of the grave, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. To this circumstance St. Paul alludes when establishing a doctrine above all others full of comfort and holy joy, in that most beautiful passage in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, which is introduced with so much propriety into the burial service of our church; “Now is

Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order : Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Nothing can be more consolatory than this assurance that Christ rose as a pledge and earnest of the resurrection of all his faithful followers to eternal life and infinite glory ; and we are indebted to the Jewish law of the first-fruits for this most impressive and beautiful illustration of it. Now we know that Jesus, rising as the first-fruits of the dead, rose in our human nature as our covenant head and representative : so that as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so may we be assured that them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

II. The second feast mentioned in this chapter is the second feast of first-fruits, which were to be presented at the time and on account of the reaping of the *wheat*

harvest. This was to be held in seven weeks, or fifty days, after the offering of the first-fruits of the barley harvest. Hence it is sometimes called the feast of first-fruits, sometimes the feast of harvest, sometimes the feast of weeks, and the New Testament names it the day of Pentecost, which last is a Greek word, and means the fiftieth day. On this feast the offering of the first-fruits consisted of two loaves of fine flour, baked with leaven; and besides these there were also brought seven lambs, a young bullock and two rams for a burnt-offering, with the meat-offering and the drink-offering belonging thereto; also one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings; and the loaves and the peace-offerings were to be waved in the usual manner before the Lord. The form of words is given with which those who brought their first-fruits were to offer them, whether at this time or at any other. We find it in Deuteronomy, the twenty-sixth chapter and fifth verse. The purport of it is a commemoration of the Lord's mercies in

bringing them out of their bondage in Egypt; and it concludes thus “ And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me.”

In addition to this presentation of the first-fruits to the Lord on this particular day, provision was mercifully made for the poor at the time of their fully reaping their fields, as follows in the twenty-second verse, “ When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clear riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest : thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger : I am the Lord thy God.” And this was enjoined both at the barley and the wheat harvest, and also at the gathering of their grapes, and the beating of their olive trees. In all cases they were to leave something to be afterwards picked up by the poor.

Now in applying this second feast of the Jews to our own circumstances, let me

observe to you that the christian church has to commemorate on its day that miraculous gift of tongues which God poured down upon his apostles when assembled together in one place with one accord, whereby they were enabled to preach the gospel in every language. Here were the first-fruits of those manifold graces with which the Holy Ghost has ever since blessed the church. Then were those three thousand souls converted who may well be considered as a kind of first-fruits of that glorious number which already has been and shall hereafter be converted to God by the preaching of the gospel. And what are the first-fruits of the spirit which believers have received now, that peace and love and hope and trust and joy in God, and that measure of sanctification which has already been bestowed upon them, but an earnest of that full degree of happiness and holiness which they shall hereafter enjoy in the kingdom of their God and Father. So speaks the apostle, in Ephesians, the first chapter and thirteenth verse, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." So again, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, the fifth chapter and fourth verse, where the apostle expresses his desire that "mortality might be swallowed up of life," and adds, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And again in the epistle to the Romans, the eighth chapter and twenty-second verse, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Thus the spiritual life begun in the soul by the Holy Ghost is a first-fruit of its immortality and glory, the hope produced is an earnest of full possession, the ardent desire excited is a pledge of a satisfying enjoyment, the redemption from sin already in some measure experienced, is the beginning of that complete

redemption of the soul from all its power, and of the body from the grave, which shall hereafter be accomplished, and that principle of holiness now infused, is part and parcel and sure and happy pledge of that image of God, in which the believer shall hereafter awake. “For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy, so are the branches.”

III. The third feast mentioned is that of the feast of Trumpets. It is noticed thus in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses, “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath; a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein; but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.” Less information is given us of this feast in the holy scriptures than of any of the others. It is not particularly mentioned in the New Testament, neither are we informed in the Old Testament what it commemorated, or on what account it was instituted. It seems, however, from the day on which it was to be observed,

to have been an annunciation of the New Year. For this day, namely, the new moon of the month Tisri, had always been the beginning of the year with the Jews, until it was changed on their deliverance out of Egypt, as we see in the beginning of the twelfth chapter of Exodus: and this day, namely the first day of the seventh month, continued to be the first of the year for all *civil and political purposes*, the other month, namely that in which the passover was held, being reckoned the first month in all their *religious* ceremonies, and observancies, even as our own ecclesiastical year begins with the first sunday in Advent. And probably the reason why it was not so honoured as the other three annual feasts, on which all the males were required to appear at Jerusalem, was because it did not directly commemorate any one of the great religious events connected with their history. It is here expressly called a memorial, and in the tenth chapter of the book of Numbers it is spoken of, along with the other occasions on which the trumpets were blown, in these

terms, "That they may be to you for a memorial before your God." They would thus be reminded, at the beginning of the year, of all the Lord's goodness to them. It might be also intended, we may suppose, to remind God of the covenant which he had made with them, and of the blessings which he had promised them in it; and we may hope that it also served to remind them of the obedience which that covenant required on their part, and of the gratitude and love which they owed to him for the blessings which they had received, and which they expected, from his hands. The Psalmist speaks of this feast in the same manner, and calls it a testimony. "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt; where I heard a language that I understood not."

The offerings which were to be presented on this day are enumerated in the twenty-ninth chapter of the book of Numbers. They

consisted of a bullock, a ram, and seven lambs for a burnt-offering, with a proportionate meat-offering with each, and of a kid of the goats for a sin-offering, to make an atonement for them. And these offerings were in addition to the regular daily offerings, and to those which were offered on the first day of every month. Be not wearied if I again remind you, that at all times, and under all circumstances, the Israelites had no approach to God, but by sacrifices of atonement.

In application of this ceremony I observe to you that the sounding of the trumpet is frequently used to describe the proclamation of the word of God, and the preaching of the gospel. The watchman's trumpet is compared to the prophet's word in the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel, and the direction to Isaiah is, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." And when the recovery and restoration of the people is to be effected by the preaching of the word, it is spoken of by this prophet under the same figure, "It shall

come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Thus should the *gospel trumpet* sound, and the voice of him be lifted up that preaches the unsearchable riches of Christ, that publisheth the glad tidings of great joy; and blessed are they that know the joyful sound. It bears a testimony for Jesus to all unto whom it comes, and tells them continually of his rich grace and salvation. It refreshes their memories. Oh! that it may convert many hearts.

IV. The fourth solemnity mentioned was the great day of atonement, which was observed on the tenth day of the same month, and as I endeavoured to set its nature and the ceremonies attending it fully before you in my last sermon, I add no more to the observations which I then offered to you.

V. I proceed therefore to the last great annual feast of the Jews mentioned in this

chapter, which was the feast of tabernacles. This began on the fifteenth day of the same month, and continued for seven days, the first of which was a holy convocation, on which no servile work was to be done, and again the eighth was another holy convocation, on which no servile work should be done.

The sacrifices to be offered were very peculiar, and more numerous than on any other occasion. On the first day of the feast a burnt-offering was presented of no less than thirteen young bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year, all without blemish, and along with each of these animals a proportionate meat-offering and drink-offering, with one kid of the goats for a sin-offering. On each successive day they diminished the number of bullocks by one, with its meat-offering, but the number of the other animals was kept up every day the same. As the scripture assigns no reason for these peculiar numbers and the change of them, we shall not attempt to imagine any, or endeavour to be wise above what is written.

During those seven days the Israelites were required to dwell in booths made of the branches of various specified trees, whence the feast was called the feast of tabernacles, or tents, or booths. It was to be observed thus we are expressly told in remembrance that the Lord had “made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.” The Jews observed it by building these tents of the branches of trees on the flat tops of their houses, and in their court yards, and in some parts of the streets. In the book of Exodus this feast is also called the feast of ingathering, because, as is explained in the book of Deuteronomy, it was held “after they had gathered in their corn and their wine,” and it was to be a time of joyful thanksgiving for that mercy also.

In concluding my applications I observe that some have supposed that in this ceremony there was an intimation of that stupendous mystery of godliness, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Certain it is that the Evangelist has made use of the very word by which

this feast was named, for when we read “ the word was made flesh, and *dwelt* among us,” it would be in more strict and exact conformity with the original language to translate, the word was made flesh, and *tabernacled* among us. But be this as it may, our Lord was at least pleased to direct the minds of the people to himself in a peculiar manner at the time of this feast. We read in the gospel of St. John, the seventh chapter, and thirty-seventh verse, “ In the last day, that great day of the feast,” (which was this feast of tabernacles,) “ Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.”

We are however fully authorized in considering the circumstances of this feast to be representative of the Christian's life upon earth. St. Paul distinctly applies the case of the Patriarchs in this view. He says that by faith they sojourned in the land of promise as

in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles ; that they looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God ; that they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and thereby declared plainly that they were seeking and desiring a country, that is, a heavenly one. Should not we also feel that we are yet in the wilderness ? that here we have no continuing city ? and that this is not our rest ? Powerfully indeed may this Jewish festival teach us not to take up our home and habitation here, as if we were fixed and established for ever ; but rather to look upon ourselves as sojourners and wayfaring men, inhabiting tents of perishable and frail materials which are soon to be taken down. Oh ! that it might teach us to live, according to Apostolic instruction, as those who know that “ if the earthly house of this our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

SERMON XIII.

THE PENAL CODE OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

LEVIT. XXIV. 14.

Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp ; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

IN several preceding sermons I have been endeavouring to give you a general view of the Jewish law, as it established and ordered their religious services, and to shew you how those services, consisting almost entirely of sacrifices, typified the great truths of the gospel. You would probably perceive that I omitted some chapters in this book of Levitians preceding that from which I took my last text, which chapters contain most of those offences which are called capital, and

were to be punished with death. As the circumstance to which the present text refers was one of those offences, it is my intention to give you in this sermon as brief a view as I can of the penal code of the Jews. I have endeavoured to collect from the various parts of the scriptures those crimes which were to be punished with death, and I will place them before you in a general view previous to our consideration of the particular circumstance of the present offence. And you will bear it in mind that I am now to speak of a law which was given by Almighty God himself, and entirely by his own appointment for the government of that people, which he had especially chosen, and to which he revealed his will.

The offence which stood at the head of all the criminal law was *Idolatry*. This was the greatest crime of all, being a direct renunciation of God, and a transgression of his first and greatest law, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” It was uniformly to be punished by death. No commutation, no expiation

could be made for it under the Jewish law. And not only so, but if any person should attempt to seduce another into idolatry, he also should be put to death, however near a relation, or however dear to natural affection, he might be. The law run thus, (Deut. xiii. 6) "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other Gods; thou shalt not consent unto him nor hearken to him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people." So if any of their cities should fall into idolatry, the rest of the nation were to go against it, and "smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that was therein." Those also who made any approach to idolatry by professing witchcraft, or having familiar spirits, were surely to be put to death, being stoned with stones.

Moreover, against all those that sought after such as had familiar spirits, and were wizards, though the law was not to be executed upon them by the people, yet God would set his face against them, and they should be cut off from among his people. Such was the case with king Saul, who went to consult the witch of Endor.

Next after these came the crime of *Blasphemy*. This was another grievous sin against God, and is the offence to which the text refers. Also presumptuous sabbath-breaking, of which an instance is found in Numbers xv. 32, in the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath-day, ranked in the same class.

Great and wilful *Contempt* of the authority of parents or of the chief magistrate of the land, was also another capital offence. Every one that cursed his father or mother should surely be put to death. Also every stubborn and rebellious son, who would not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they had chastened him, would not hearken to them, was to be brought before the elders, and being judged

by them, should be stoned with stones, that he might die. And in like manner presumptuous disobedience to the ecclesiastical ruler or the civil magistrate, for these in a certain sense are parents, was a capital offence, as the law runs, “The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die : and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously.”

Wilful Murder was another crime which was punished with death. This had been commanded to the patriarchs, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed ;” and it was repeated by the Jewish law, “He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death.” If this were done accidentally, or under circumstances which made it amount only to what is called manslaughter, there were cities of refuge appointed, to which the man-slayer might flee for safety, but if any one had killed

another wilfully and maliciously, he must die. The law was, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die." Another great offence against the person was to suffer the same penalty, namely, the attempt to make any one a slave. The law was in these words, "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

Adultery was also one of the highest offences under the law of God, and a capital crime. The law was, "The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." And this extended to other cases of female unchastity, as also to all forcible violation. All unnatural crimes and incestuous connections were also to be punished by death. And the people were compelled, under the penalty of this last-extremity, to the observance of that precept of holiness given with such solemnity and earnestness in the gospel, "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

The crimes therefore which were punished

with death by that law which God himself enacted for the government of his people were idolatry, blasphemy, and sabbath-breaking ; wilful disobedience to parents or the judge ; murder and stealing a man to make him a slave ; and adultery, with other sins of licentiousness and depraved passions. Mark the difference in the estimation in which the guilt of actions is held by the law of God and that of most modern nations, for instance, our own. Idolatry, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, adultery, and unchastity, have the most trifling penalties attached to them, or none at all ; while, on the contrary, offences against property, which in such numerous instances are punishable with death by *our* laws, were not in any one case visited with so high a penalty under the law of God. Restitution of the thing stolen, with the penalty of double its value, and in one case of five times its value, was to be made, and if the thief could not pay this, then he might be taken or sold as a slave, till payment was made, or till the coming of the year of release. All this shews plainly

enough that the divine law in all its penal punishments most regarded the preservation of the religion and morals of the people, while human laws generally consider their property to be more valuable than either. ●

After thus setting a general view of the criminal code of the Mosaic law before you, I now proceed to the consideration of this particular case in which death was inflicted. The circumstances were these. The son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, strove with a man of Israel in the camp. And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed. Up to this time it seems that there had been no express penalty attached to this crime, and therefore they who heard him brought him to Moses, as they were to do in all cases of difficulty, to know what should be done with him. He was therefore kept in custody till the will of the Lord should be known concerning him. "And the Lord said unto Moses, bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp, and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and

let all the congregation stone him.” And then the law was promulged and established among them for all time to come. “Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And ● he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him : as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.”

The sin of blasphemy and cursing is therefore a great and grievous sin. It is a direct and daring insult of the majesty and holiness of God. Alas ! that so much of it should be heard among us. But though the blasphemer, the curser, and the swearer, may not now have a law that condemns him to death, yet let him know that the Lord will not hold him guiltless, and let him hear the words of that third commandment of the decalogue, and fear, and do no more so wickedly.

There are certain circumstances mentioned in the text, connected with the punishment of this man, which put additional marks upon the enormity of his crime. He was to be

carried without the camp, that the tents of Israel might not be defiled by his sin or his death. Every leper was to be thrust out of the camp. The bodies of Nadab and Abihu, when struck dead by fire from the Lord, were carried without the camp. The bullock sacrificed as a sin-offering was carried and burnt without the camp. These coincidences shew that the blasphemer was to be dealt with as one full of defilement and covered with sin. So again, when the execution of the sentence was about to take place, those who had heard the blasphemy or curse, were to lay their hands upon the guilty person's head, not only testifying thereby against him, but intimating that his death must be laid entirely to his own account, and that thus they put away all the guilt of this great crime from themselves and the people. Then *all* the congregation were to stone him with stones ; *all* were required to take part in the infliction of this punishment, to shew the universal abhorrence in which the offence was held, that was so full of impiety towards God.

There is another circumstance in the narration of this blasphemer's crime which it is worth our while to notice. It is said in the eleventh verse that "The Israelitish woman's son blasphemed *the name*," nothing more than the name, not the name of the Lord. That indeed is meant, and our translators have therefore inserted it. But the omission of *whose* name he blasphemed seems to be intentional, to shew the sacred reverence and awe which surround it. Oh! with what deep regard should we always utter that holy name of God. Never should it be upon our lips in light and trifling conversation, never break forth in those vain and irreverent exclamations or asseverations by which ordinary discourse is frequently rendered so sinful, which without them would be harmless or useful. If we are assured that for every *idle* word which men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment, how much more for every impious one! If even *neglect* of God be a high offence against him, in whom we live and move and have our being, and who has given his dear

son to die for our sins ; how much deeper in enormity and blacker in dye must be such actual contempt of his majesty and defiance of his law ! My christian brethren, let us all most earnestly cultivate high, holy, and reverent thoughts of God, and set a watch upon our lips, lest we sin with our tongue, whenever we utter his great and glorious name.

There are two instances in scripture in which this law was put in force, to procure the death of the innocent by means of false witnesses. One is the case of Naboth, as recorded in the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Kings, against whom two men, sons of Belial, through the suggestion of that wicked woman Jezebel, “ witnessed in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.” The other is the case of St. Stephen, which we read in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Then again “ they suborned men which said, we have heard him speak

blasphemous words against Moses and against God," and afterwards, notwithstanding the defence which he made to them, they ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. You will remember also that on two occasions our blessed Lord himself narrowly escaped stoning, because the Jews falsely considered him as having been guilty of this offence: once, when he appropriated to himself the incommunicable name of God, I AM; and the second time, when in like manner asserting his own divinity he said, "I and my Father are one." And in fact upon this very accusation he *was* condemned by the high priest, so far as *he had power* to condemn him; for he said, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Ah! what guilt is theirs who bear false witness! They may even be chargeable with the sin of blasphemy itself, at least when they give their testimony on oath. And how careful should judges of every kind be,

to endeavour to elicit the truth, and to judge righteous judgment lest they condemn the innocent to death.

You will find by examining the scriptures, that opposing and speaking against either the power or grace of God is considered to be blasphemy. Thus Rabshakeh is charged with blasphemy for asserting that the God of Israel had no more power than the gods of the heathen. And thus the Psalmist pleads, “O God, how long shall the adversary reproach, shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?” Thus moreover St. Paul says of himself that he was before his conversion a blasphemer, because he had spoken against and opposed the grace of Christ: and doubtless it is for the same reason that St. James says of the rich men of his day, “Do they not *blaspheme* that worthy name by the which ye are called?” And while opposition to Christ is thus looked upon in scripture, how dreadful is the denunciation against this sin, when it is committed against the Holy Ghost. These are our Lord’s own words, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven

unto men. But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." And this he said in replying to the Jews, who had accused him of performing his miracles by a concert and confederacy with the devil. From all this how careful should we be not to reproach the Lord, or magnify ourselves against him ; not to object against the gospel of Christ, and endeavour to hinder it ; not to detract from those glorious operations of power and grace which the Holy Ghost works in the souls of men ; lest we incur the guilt of blasphemy, and become exposed to the terrible judgment here denounced.

Finally let us beware lest we cause others to blaspheme. We may lead them to curse by irritating their passions, or provoking their rage, and we may cause them to speak evil of the Lord and his ways by the commission of

any such sin as shall bring discredit upon religion. See a melancholy instance of this in the history of David, and the heavy charge brought against him on this very account, "Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." Hear the strong reproof of the Apostle Paul to the Jews who lived not according to the principles and precepts of their law, "The name of God," he says, "is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." And alas, it is charged upon many Christians, to their great reproach and shame, that they have lived in foreign lands among heathens, Mahometans, and other rejecters of our holy faith, in a manner so negligent of religion, and so dissolute in morals, as to cause them to be more full of contempt of Christianity and of hatred to it, than they would otherwise have been. The same effects may be produced by those who live at home; and it is to be feared that many a one has been encouraged in sin, hardened in heart, and driven to greater enormities in profane swearing and cursing, and every breach of

God's holy laws, and many a one also turned out of the way, and stopped in their course, when beginning to walk in the ways of Christ, by the irreligious and immoral lives of persons professing and calling themselves Christians, or by the scoffing and contemptuous manner in which they have spoken of religion. How great is the guilt of such, who not only individually sin against God, and ruin their own souls, but also cause that his name is dishonoured and blasphemed, his laws broken, his authority disregarded, his gospel despised around them, and the souls of others brought into imminent peril or deadly loss by their evil communications.

And let it be remembered that the influence of a holy life and conversation is equally great in its tendency to promote the increase of true piety and holiness in others, and thus God is glorified, as by a contrary conduct he is blasphemed. To this our Lord exhorts, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." For this the Apostle entreats, "Dearly beloved, I beseech

you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." What a holy ambition of character would this be, that God may be glorified by others through its influence upon them ! What a sacred desire to be seen of men ! The Lord grant that this desire may be strong in our hearts, and that this holy and happy influence may be gained by us.

SERMON XIV.

THE JUBILEE YEAR.

LEVIT. XXV. 10.

Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man to his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

THE whole state of the Jewish nation, civil, political, and religious, was of a very peculiar nature. The Lord God was their governor and king, till in the pride of their hearts they would not be content with his sovereignty, but desired to have a king to rule over them as the other nations had. Yet he himself appointed their laws and ordinances and ceremonies. And while they were taught by this to consider themselves as under his

especial government and protection, these very appointments were every one of them intended to shadow forth the dispensation of his spiritual kingdom in the times of the gospel.

Among these appointments there were none more remarkable than the sabbatical and jubilee years, of which an account is contained in this twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus. They were ordinances peculiarly calculated to impress upon the minds of the Israelites, that they and their possessions were the Lord's; that they had received all from him, and that he had made such dispositions of them as he pleased. But let *us* remember that they also represent the peculiar privileges, mercies, and blessings of the gospel of Christ.

We will enquire into the nature and intention of these remarkable appointments. The text indeed refers only to the year of jubilee, but I shall take occasion from it to consider the sabbatical year also. I will endeavour then, in the first place, to give the scripture account of these ordinances, and, in the

second place, to shew in what manner they represented the mercy and grace of the gospel. May the God of sabbaths and ordinances give his blessing on the subject.

I. The account of the sabbatical year is given us in the preceding verses. And the first thing to be observed of it is this, that it was to be a year of rest to the land. As on the seventh day of the week, so on each seventh year, there was to be no tilling, ploughing, mowing, or reaping, of any kind. The land was also to lie open for the common use of all the people. That which grew naturally and spontaneously of itself, or was the produce of seed scattered or left in the preceding year, might be gathered and used for food by all. It was for the poor, as well as for the owner, and for the sustenance of the beasts of the field. Evidently one principal intention herein was to put an additional honour on the sabbath day, as a memorial of the rest of God from his work of creation. In the next chapter we find several grievous threatenings against the people if they should walk contrary to God, and not obey his

commandments and statutes, and especially that they should be carried away captive into an enemy's land, during which time their own land should lie desolate; and we find in the thirty-fifth verse, that this judgment should be inflicted upon them for their neglect of the rest of the sabbath and the sabbatical year, for the Lord there says, "As long as the land lieth desolate, it shall rest; because it did not rest on your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it." And when that captivity came, and the Jews were carried away to Babylon, it is expressly said that they were servants unto the king of the Chaldees and his sons, "until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." All this is a manifest proof of the jealousy with which God regards the observance of his sabbaths.

Another remarkable circumstance in the Jewish law respecting the sabbatical year was the remission of all debts that were owing to the Israelites by any of their brethren. We find it in the beginning of the

fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release : every creditor that lendeth ought to his neighbour shall release it ; he shall not exact it of his neighbour or his brother ; because it is called the Lord's release." The creditor might exact his debt at any time previous to the year of release ; but when that arrived, it was to be remitted by him.

I now proceed to state to you the circumstances respecting the jubilee year, to which the text especially refers. It returned every fiftieth year. "Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year." When they had numbered seven times seven, or forty-nine years, then they were to cause the trumpet to sound throughout the whole land, proclaiming that the approaching year was the jubilee, to be observed with peculiar ceremonies. It is from this sounding of the trumpet that its name is derived, the Hebrew word, jubilee, meaning a sonorous and joyful sound. On this year, as on every seventh or sabbatical year, they were forbidden either to sow or reap, and assured

that the land should bring forth sufficient fruit in the preceding years to meet this deficiency. In this respect it was the same as every sabbatical year, but there were other circumstances peculiar to itself alone, of a very remarkable nature. These were, the universal restoration of their lands, and the universal restoration of their freedom.

If any of the Israelites, through misfortune, imprudence, or misconduct, had been obliged to sell his patrimonial lands, or any part thereof, they returned to him free at the year of jubilee, if he could not redeem them sooner. The whole country was held by them under a particular tenure. Jehovah himself was the Lord under whom they held it. They could not alienate it, or sell it out entirely for ever ; it could only be disposed of till the next ensuing jubilee, and then every man and every family entered again on his original possessions. Their land was a grant to them from God himself with this reservation upon it. Thus we read in the twenty-third verse, “ The land shall not be sold for ever ; for the land is mine ; for ye

are strangers and sojourners with me." This was the universal law to the nation. There is something analogous to this in the acts of our own country. Lands granted by the king or given by the nation for splendid services, are often attached to the title of nobility which usually is conferred at the same time, and descend with it in continual succession. The present possessor may, by extravagance or misconduct, deprive *himself* of any advantage from them, even during the whole term of his natural life, but at his death they return again to the heir of the family. Among the Israelites every inheritance was held under this peculiar law of God's appointment, which we are considering, and at the jubilee year *every* man returned to his house and possessions.

And moreover, if any of the Israelites had been reduced to a state of slavery, whether he had sold himself voluntarily, or had been sold for debt or theft or other cause by the authority and sentence of the judge, all universally recovered their freedom in the year of jubilee. The general law respecting

personal slavery, for personal slavery was allowed by the law, was this, that every one was to be released from it at the end of six years; no one could be held in bondage for a longer time; and if an Israelite had sold himself to a rich sojourner among them of another nation, he might redeem himself at any time within the six years, or be redeemed by his relatives, on payment of an equitable sum. Some however chose to continue longer in that state, and this determination was to be made known before the magistrate, and acknowledged by allowing his ear to be pierced with an awl, and fastened to the door of his master's house. But these slaves, and all others, of the Israelitish nation, were to go out perfectly free at the year of jubilee, for then they were to proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. These were then to return every man to his possession, and every man to his family.

Now these ordinances were most extraordinary. They were founded entirely on the command of God, and secured by his

providence. He engaged that the preceding year should always produce enough for the supply both of itself, and of the sabbatical or jubilee year. No human legislator would ever have dared to promulge such a law as this, with such a promise attached to it, upon his own authority, and the appointment of these ordinances is a manifest proof that the whole of the Jewish law, and consequently of the Jewish religion, was immediately from God.

These were also wise and merciful appointments. Wise for one great purpose which God had in view, because by this law, which forbade the perpetual alienation of their land, a regular genealogy of every particular tribe and family would be preserved, and thereby might be determined the exact fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the Redeemer, and the stock from which he should spring: merciful also, since every family was preserved from being totally ruined for ever by any head of it, and every individual prevented from being cruelly oppressed beyond measure, or without hope of relief.

What a joyful year must the year of jubilee have been to the poor. They were the people that had the greatest cause to rejoice in it. Their debts were released, their liberties recovered, their possessions restored. The sound of the jubilee trumpet must have been to them a joyful sound indeed. And we are told by Jewish writers that at that season the poor debtors and slaves and those who had been obliged to part with their lands, crowned their heads with garlands, and made processions, and shewed every demonstration of joy. It was a blessed and happy season to them. The hard-hearted creditor might repine at the liberation of his slave; the rich man might feel reluctance to restore the land; but among the poor all would be gladness, and joy, and happiness. My soul looks back with delight upon the glad occasion, and fancies itself even now in the happy land, when every poor man's face bore an expression of satisfaction, and beamed with a smile of thankfulness and joy.

II. I now proceed, in the second place, to shew in what manner these ordinances

among the Jews represented the mercy and grace of the gospel.

There can be no doubt that this was the year to which our Lord referred, when, quoting the prophet Isaiah, he spake of the acceptable year of the Lord. He reads thus in the synagogue from that prophet, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And then he said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The gospel dispensation therefore is the sinner's jubilee ; and as that word jubilee signifies a joyful sound, so the word gospel signifies glad tidings. And blessed are the people who hear the sound of joy which it sends forth.

View the sinner as a debtor, a debtor to God in the sum of ten thousand talents, and having nothing wherewith he can pay. The gospel proclaims a remission, a remission of

debts, that is, of sins, to every soul that is oppressed with their weight, and earnestly desires the benefit of its grace. And never ought the proclamation of a general goal delivery to give half the pleasure to poor imprisoned debtors and felons, which the general proclamation of the remission of sins ought to give to sinners. The whole dispensation of the gospel is a jubilee year, a season of grace, and every sermon that preaches its loving-kindness and mercy, is the sound of its trumpet announcing the glad tidings of salvation through the redemption of Jesus upon its terms of repentance and faith in him.

View the sinner as a bondman, a servant, and slave. He has sold himself by sin to Satan, who, as a tyrannical master, has him under his power, and holds him in his chain. But the gospel jubilee proclaims a deliverance. Jesus rescues sinners who believe in him from their bondage. He destroys the works of the devil, and sets his oppressed captives free from all his power.—Again, the sinner is in bondage under wrath and

condemnation. The law-trumpet thunders out a curse upon his soul. Its harsh loud note, as it sounds from Sinai proclaiming that curse, condemns and terrifies. But the silver tone of the gospel-trumpet proclaims pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God. It announces a justification through faith, and a sanctification by grace, and thus inspires hope and joy.—Once more, the sinner is a slave to fear. He is afraid of God, afraid of death, afraid of a world to come. But the gospel brings liberty, liberty of conscience, liberty of soul, liberty in prayer. By it he receives, “not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption,” by which he cries, Abba, Father. Jesus, by his power and grace, delivers those “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” and gives them in prospect after it, a hope full of immortality.

Now view the sinner as having spent and wasted his original inheritance. Once the first head of his family held a fair possession in Eden. But it was forfeited through transgression. His descendants have trodden in

his steps. They too have sold their heavenly inheritance for a thing of nought, even for the pleasure of sinning. But the gospel-trumpet proclaims a return. "Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." The rich free grace of the Redeemer is made known, giving to as many as receive him the power and privilege of again becoming the sons of God. He proclaims a return to the love and favour of the eternal Father, and the enjoyment of heaven. He has himself entered into the purchased possession, redeemed for sinners who shall believe on him with the price of his own blood. In his father's house are many mansions, and thither is he gone to prepare a place for his ransomed people. There is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The dispensation of the gospel is the real jubilee then of which the other was the type. This is the acceptable year of the Lord. Behold now is the accepted time, and now is the day of freedom, remission, and salvation. 'The

year of jubilee is come, Return ye ransomed sinners home.' Return, like the prodigal son, with penitence and prayer, believing in Christ, and you shall again recover and be reinstated in the fair inheritance which you had sold and lost through sin.

And now, in application of this subject, I answer those who may be disposed to ask, to whom is this proclamation of mercy made? It is made with the grace and freeness of the King of kings. The proclamation of Cyrus, giving leave to the captive Jews to return to Jerusalem was not more large. That proclamation ran thus, "Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is at Jerusalem." The proclamation of the gospel runs thus, as it is delivered by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." It runs thus, as in sweet and mild accents it falls from the mouth of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest." "Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." It runs thus, as it proceeds from the spirit and the bride, the church of Christ, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Well might it have been said, "Ye have sown the wind, and ye shall reap the whirlwind;" but instead thereof we read, as I have already quoted, "Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." Yes, be it ever remembered that this deliverance is perfectly free to the sinner, though procured at immense cost to his great surety and bondsman. "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." The inheritance on which the returning soul is to enter is called, "the purchased possession," because it has been purchased at the cost of the life of the Son of God in the body of our human nature. It is the reception of this truth which secures the blessing. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and

he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name." Let all then come to him who through a felt conviction of their sins think themselves ready to perish. Let them seek the Saviour. Let them return unto God through him. He is the redeemer of their forfeited inheritance ; he is the restorer of their lost liberty ; he pays the debts which they have contracted with God, and answers every demand of his law upon them ; it is his grace which sets the oppressed free ; it is his year which is the year of jubilee. " Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," in the Lord deliverance from sin, restoration to my birthright, and an inheritance in heaven. Draw nigh then to him in penitence ; apply in prayer ; come in faith. Let the eye of your mind take an enlightened view of the gospel method of salvation. Let the desires of your soul spring forth to possess it. And in order that you may possess it, strive, oh ! strive to " win Christ and to be found in

him." Labour that you may enter into his rest, that peaceful and happy land of religion and piety on earth, which is an earnest and anticipation of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," of buildings "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Happy indeed are ye who have known the joyful sound. You are "justified freely;" you have "peace with God;" you may "rejoice in hope of his glory." You are made free, and "those whom the Son makes free, are free indeed." You are delivered "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of sons of God." "Stand fast then in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again by the yoke of bondage." "Ye have been called to liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Yes, beloved brethren, you are no longer the slaves of Satan and sin, but oh! remember and shew that you are the servants of Christ. You are no longer debtors lying in a prison-house, but oh! ever think how greatly you are indebted to Christ for your liberation, yea, that you owe to him

even your whole spirit, and soul, and body. Yes, you are free indeed, but you have been made free from sin that you may be servants of righteousness. You are not your own. You have been “bought with a price,” Oh! you well know what that price was, “therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his.” Shew that you not only choose to remain with him, as a slave who had allowed his ear to be nailed to the door of a kind master’s house, but that you desire to abide with him as a son, to serve him with the utmost affection and love, even as a son begotten and born again by his grace.

SERMON XV.

THE SANCTIONS OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

LEVIT. XXVI. 3, 4.

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them ; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit ?

IN every age and nation they who have feared God and wrought righteousness have been accepted of him : and equally, on the other hand, they who have despised his word, and refused him their service, have been rejected by him. These grounds of proceeding are according to the eternal laws of truth and righteousness, and necessarily arise out of the just and holy character of God. But the Israelites, besides this general principle to which they might have arrived by the natural

dictates of reason and conscience, had a peculiar declaration of God's favour to them so long as they should be obedient, and of his wrath if they should be disobedient. As they had a peculiar law given them by express revelation, by which they were distinguished from all other nations, and greatly honoured above them, so had they also special promises of God's protection and kindness to their nation, and special threatenings of his severest judgments, according to the manner in which they conducted themselves towards him. The sanctions of their law were unquestionably of a temporal nature. National prosperity should follow their faithful observance of it; national miseries should be the punishment of their departure from it. But although this omission of the mention of a future state and its sanctions appears in the Jewish law, there are not a few intimations of it in various parts of the books of Moses themselves, which increase and grow clearer in the scriptures of succeeding inspired writers; so that there is no question but that the Jews had all along some knowledge of that

fundamental and all-important truth : and the reason why it was not expressly declared to them seems to be this, that life and immortality could not be clearly made known, without an equally clear revelation of Him, who is the resurrection and the life, which it was the will and wisdom of God not to bring forth until the fulness of the time should come. And as the dispensation under which this chosen people was placed, was, as I have frequently observed, preparatory for the dispensation of the gospel, so these sanctions of present and temporal rewards and punishments, under a special and extraordinary providence, shadowed forth those of the eternal world under the future and final judgment of God, in which he “will render to every man according to his works, to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life, but to those who are contentious, and do not obey the truth” (that is, the truth of the gospel) “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man who doeth evil.” I may add also that

that extraordinary providence, by which God enforced his law and administered the affairs of the Jewish nation, did in some measure supply the want of the higher sanctions of the life to come, and that when the knowledge of life and immortality was fully brought to light by the gospel, the whole polity of the Jews ceased to be, and no such extraordinary providence is now manifest. It is most true, that as a general position, and taking in its spiritual comforts, godliness has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come, and sin has many a present and temporal misery necessarily attached to it, yet still the christian is happily taught to look far higher than any such present things, and is actuated by hopes and fears far beyond any thing that is circumscribed by this short and uncertain period of his being.

With these previous observations I now proceed to state to you the promises and threatenings which were held out to the Israelites under their law, as they are recorded in this chapter, with which I intend

to conclude my Exposition of the book of Leviticus. You will find that after the laws referred to in the first two verses, the chapter is divided into three distinct parts; the first containing promises of great good on their obedience, the second containing threatenings of most severe punishment on their disobedience, and the third containing an assurance of mercy and of returning favour upon their humble and sincere repentance.

I. The first part extends from the third to the fourteenth verse, and begins with a promise of great plenty in all the fruits of the earth, so that large crops of grass and corn from the land, abundant produce from the fruit-bearing trees, and plentiful vintages, should afford them a rich supply from one end of the year to the other. It goes on to state the safety and security in which they should dwell, with deliverance from the sword of enemies, and from evil beasts. If invading armies should attack them, they should in all cases put them to flight and destroy them, however inferior in numbers they might be. It assures them of a constant continuance

of God's presence among them, and of the preservation of their religion and its privileges. And it closes with a special reference to the great mercy which he had already shewn them by their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. Now these are the greatest blessings which a nation can possibly enjoy, plenty, peace, and religion. These were promised to the Jews, so long as they should be obedient to the law of their God, and by that special providence, under which, as I have observed the nation was placed, they were constantly fulfilled; and God might at any time have appealed to their own eyes and experience, whether one thing had ever failed of all the good which he had promised to do them.

II. The second part of this chapter, which extends from the fourteenth to the fortieth verse, contains threatenings of various severe punishments with which the Lord would visit the people, if they should not be obedient to his law, but walk contrary to him. The cause of his anger is plainly given, and the warning fully stated, "If ye will not hearken

to me, and will not do all these commandments, if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant," then he tells them, dreadful consequences would follow: and if they should still not hearken to him, nor be reformed by these things, then he would punish them yet seven times more severely for their sins. He tells them generally that he would set his face against them, that his soul should abhor them, that he would not smell the savour of their sweet odours, and that he would walk contrary to them in fury. He declares in particular that they should suffer various painful and distressing diseases of body, that he would send the pestilence among them, that wild beasts of the field should devour them, that their enemies should prevail against them, that the heavens should be to them as iron through which neither rain nor dew could fall, and the earth as brass through which vegetation could not spring, that their strength in cultivating should be spent in vain, for the land should not yield

her increase, neither the trees their fruits, and that in other cases, they should sow their seed in vain, for their enemies should eat it, and that dreadful famines should be sent to them, so that they should even eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters should they eat. He concludes by declaring that the sanctuaries and the land should be brought to desolation, that their ordinances should cease, and themselves be scattered among the heathen, and carried captives into the land of their enemies, and that there they should have faintness and fear of heart, and should pine away in their iniquities. We well know from the sacred history how these threatenings were executed, how again and again God vindicated his truth and justice upon them. We read it in the famines which they often experienced, in the many times in which their land was plundered and laid waste, and themselves reduced under the power of the Philistines, Assyrians, and others ; we read it in the carrying away of the ten tribes, and in the captivity of Judah and Benjamin at Babylon ; we see it at this

day in the dispersion and degradation of the nation ; and the threatenings here given, and with still greater force and minuteness in the close of the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, are almost a pictorial representation of the miseries which they have now been enduring for ages and generations. And if the question be asked, why hath the Lord thus cast off his people ? wherefore hath he done thus unto them ? what meaneth the heat of this great anger ? The answer is at hand in the words of scripture. “ Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of Egypt.”

III. The third division of this chapter reaches from the fortieth verse to the end, and contains an assurance of mercy and of returning favour upon their humble and sincere repentance. It declares that if, even in their worst and lowest state, they should humbly confess their iniquities and trespasses, and acknowledge the hand of God and his justice in the afflictions which they were suffering,

and should meekly accept them as the punishment of their sins, then the Lord would again shew them favour, he would remember his covenant with their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and on its account would not abhor them, nor cast them away utterly. Although this promise of mercy on their repentance here, refers especially to the time when they should be driven into an enemy's land, yet in other places it is made general, and is referred to any of God's punishments upon them. And the whole history of the nation shews that such was the case through the whole course of that peculiar dispensation: they never repented nor sought his face in vain: whenever they returned unto him in penitence and prayer, and when they put away their idols and served him truly, when they again began to keep his commandments and observe his ordinances, he returned to them with mercy and favour, he accepted their repentance, he delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, restored to them the years which the canker-worm had eaten, and blessed them with peace and

plenty. In particular, with reference to his restoration of them from the Babylonish captivity, read the humble confession and fervent prayer of Ezra in the ninth chapter of that prophet and the fifth verse, and again of Nehemiah in the first chapter of that book, and you will see what humiliation, and confession, and acknowledgment of God's righteousness in their afflictions, and what return of heart and service had prepared them for the recovery of his favour. And verily we know, from the sure word of prophecy, that there will, at some time, be yet again a great and universal repentance of that ancient, much honoured, and much afflicted people, that they will look upon him whom they have pierced and mourn, that they will return and seek the Lord their God, and the spiritual David their king, and that then the Lord will set to his hand a second time, and gather them out of all nations among whom they are scattered, and plant them in their own land again, and will make them to be partakers in all the richest blessings of his gospel, and cause the receiving of them to be as life from the dead.

And now in application of this exposition of the state in which the Israelites were placed under the sanction of temporal rewards and punishments administered by a special and extraordinary providence, I wish to draw your earnest attention to the different dispensation under which we Christians are living. Our obedience to the gospel of Christ, be it remembered, is enforced, not by present, but by future sanctions. Another world is clearly presented to our view, and eternal and infinite blessedness on the one hand, with eternal and infinite misery on the other, is held forth to us as we are the true and faithful servants of Christ in this present life. His gospel is the rule of our obedience, as the law was of theirs. And that gospel having fully brought life and immortality to light, with all the awful and important realities of a future state of existence, now urges upon us an obedience to its faith on the promise of eternal life and the penalty of eternal death. It does not set before us the hope of merely perishable blessings, nor the fear of changeable sufferings. All its sanctions are stamped

with Eternity. On the one hand is an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; on the other, is a worm that never dieth and a fire that is never quenched. As these sanctions are future, we are called to walk by faith; as the judgment finally passed according to them will be eternal, we are called to consider them with the deepest interest, and to prepare for them with the utmost care. Here the soul is concerned, and not the body; here the promised land is not an earthly Canaan with its milk and honey, but heaven itself with all its infinite and uninterrupted enjoyment of happiness and glory. Here again the punishment denounced is not a famine of bread, the pestilence, or sword, the evil diseases of Egypt, or personal captivity and slavery under the iron yoke of masters in a foreign land; but everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, an eternal residence and torment among devils and damned spirits, a never-ceasing endurance of the intensity and pain of the fire of hell. My brethren, do not these things move us? Can we be careless

and unconcerned? Can we be sinful and wicked? Can we be negligent of Christ? of all that wondrous method of pity, grace, and loving-kindness, by which he has effected our redemption? of those pure and holy precepts, by which he has shewn us what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness? of that piety, and true devotedness to God, and zeal in his service, which he has so strongly inculcated upon us, and of which he has set us so perfect an example? Alas, can any of you even trifle with a matter of such momentous concern as that of the future and everlasting condition of your soul? Can you treat the question as one of light consideration, whether you shall hereafter live in heaven or in hell? I do most earnestly beseech you to give your very serious attention to the following most indisputably true, most powerfully interesting, and most overwhelmingly important facts. Reflect that you are dying creatures as to this world, but that you must live again, and be immortal in another; that the condition of that future immortality depends wholly on the manner in

which you shall live now; that the gospel has enjoined a faithful reception of Christ, proved by a true obedience to him, as the ground upon which you are to expect justification and acceptance; and that a rejection of Christ will infallibly cause you to die in your sins, and to suffer for ever. Oh! I beseech you, reflect on these things, and now turn with all sincerity and holy purpose of soul to the great and glorious Mediator of this new covenant, who will freely receive, and is fully able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Oh! receive not this grace of God in vain: flee from the wrath to come: lay hold on eternal life.

Let me also observe that this dispensation of the gospel, as well as the national covenant made with the Israelitish nation, provides mercy for the penitent. The duty of repentance is indeed one of its essential doctrines, and the fullest assurances are given in it of God's mercy to every one who humbly confesses his sins, and renouncing his evil ways unfeignedly turns to God in Christ. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over

every sinner that repenteth," and "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Let all behold here the great pity and pardoning mercy of God; and let no one be discouraged by a sense of past neglect and transgression; but if indeed he now feels such a sense, let him arise and go unto his father, and let him say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." "Come unto me," saith the divine Redeemer himself, "all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let it be specially remembered that now, under the gospel, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and that "if any man sin we have" in him "an advocate with the father," and "he is the propitiation for our sins."

This certain knowledge of a future life, so clearly brought to light by the gospel, and of the glory and happiness which shall then be enjoyed in heaven by all the faithful servants of Christ, is moreover a motive to holiness far more powerful than any earthly blessings

can possibly offer. Endeavour in thought to compare eternity with time, the soul with the body, heaven with earth, God himself with his creatures, and then you will see with what effect the gospel addresses itself to the judgment, the hopes, and desires of men, and how vastly superior its promises are to any which might be confined to the present life. Herein is also laid the firmest foundation for a Christian's resignation and satisfaction in all that variety of joy and sorrow through which he is now passing. The inequalities of life are no stumbling block to him. The prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the just do not shake his faith or discompose his mind. What might otherwise appear to be irreconcilable with the just and holy character of God in his dealings with individuals as to the present life is left, with perfect confidence on the part of the believer, to be rectified in the world to come. He considers all the circumstances of providence as now administered, to be parts of a wise and merciful discipline by which God is preparing his children for their future glory.

He believes that all things are working together for their spiritual and final good. He looks to the world to come for the difference to be made between those who serve God, and those who serve him not, between Dives and Lazarus, between the murderer Herod, and the murdered John. He does the will of God, and walks in the way of Christ, and looks for his recompense at the resurrection of the just. Oh ! that we may be enabled by the grace of the Holy Ghost to set that eternal world constantly before us, and to live in a continual regard to its blessed and most awful sanctions. Oh ! that our faith may be firmly fixed upon Him, who has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, that through him we may finally obtain a portion in that dwelling-place of God, and a part in its glory, honour, and immortality.

SERMON XVI.

THE LAW OF JEALOUSIES.

NUMBERS v. 29.

This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled.

I NOW enter on the exposition of another of the books of Moses, the book of Numbers. It bears this name because it gives an account of the numbering of the people. The first four chapters are occupied with this business, and with the disposition of the respective tribes in their encampments round the tabernacle, with the appointment of the tribe of Levi to have the charge of the tabernacle and its furniture, and to be assistants in other matters unto the priests. Omitting all particular notice of these matters, the first subject on which I enter is this of the law of jealousies, as it is called in the text. It follows our last sermon very suitably. For

I then observed to you that the Israelites were placed under a special and extraordinary providence of God, administering present temporal rewards and punishments, as they were obedient or disobedient to his laws. Now this is an instance of such administration in one peculiar case. In this particular sin direction is given that a solemn appeal shall be made to God, who engages to discover the truth, and to pass his judgment on the party, if guilty, by an immediate and extraordinary act of power.

Adultery was a crime expressly forbidden by the seventh commandment, and the punishment assigned by the law to both the adulterer and adulteress, as we saw when we considered the criminal code of the Jews, was death by stoning, when the commission of the crime was discovered. But sometimes the crime might be suspected, and a spirit of jealousy, with or without just cause, might come over the mind of the husband. In such a case express provision was made, by this law, for determining the guilt or innocence of the wife : and although God might

have declared her innocence or guilt at once, yet he chose that it should assume the form of a public trial, that the attention of the people might be the more called, both to the crime of adultery, and also to his own presence and administration of their law. This prescribed form of proceeding I will now lay before you.

The husband who suspected his wife of infidelity was to bring her before the priest, with an offering for her of the tenth part of an ephah of barley-meal, without either oil or frankincense put upon it. This offering was from a commoner and courser grain than the fine flour offered in the meat-offering, and unaccompanied by the other requisites, because it was no grateful offering of thanksgiving, but an expression of the humiliation, grief, and shame, to which the parties were put. No animal of any kind was brought nor blood shed, because this was not a case for an atoning sacrifice ; it was “ an offering of memorial,” as it is said, “ bringing iniquity to remembrance :” it was a solemn appeal to God, reminding him that he had engaged to

judge, and expecting from him a discovery of her sin, if sin had been committed, or of her justification, if she were innocent. Then the priest was to “bring her near, and set her before the Lord;” that is, he was to place her by the sanctuary, the Lord’s dwelling place, that she might consider herself as in his immediate presence, and that she and all the spectators might solemnly await his decision. Then the priest was to take holy water from the laver in an earthen vessel, and put some of the dust of the floor of the tabernacle into it, and uncovering her head, and putting the offering of memorial into her hand, and holding in his own the vessel with the water, he was to adjure her by a solemn oath; he was to declare that she should be free, if she were innocent: but he was to lay upon her this heavy curse, that, if she were guilty, the water, which she was about to drink, should cause her body to swell, and her thigh should rot. To this test of her conduct the woman was to give her full assent: solemnly referring her case to God by repeating twice, Amen, Amen.

No account is given in the sacred writings what should be done if she refused this oath, and confessed her guilt. The Jewish writers say, that in that case she escaped the penalty of death, but was to be put away by her husband, without any dowry. But if she consented to stand upon her trial before God, then the awful ceremony proceeded thus. The priest was to write the solemn curse which he had pronounced upon parchment, and to wash off the writing into the water, that the curse might thus be mixed with it: he was then to take the offering out of the woman's hand, and to wave it solemnly before the Lord, that he and the people too might all look upon it, and bear witness, and having done thus, he was to offer it upon the altar, burning a handful, or the memorial of it, with fire. Then he was to cause the woman to drink the water. And behold it should come to pass, that if she were guilty the dreadful consequence which had been threatened should infallibly befall her, but if she were innocent, no harm whatever should happen to her, but a token of her innocence

should be added ; she should be free, and should conceive seed. Such was the law of trial by the bitter water of jealousy, called ~~the~~ bitter, because of the bitter effects which it produced in the case of the guilty. And now I proceed to make some reflections upon it.

First then, it is evident that this was a striking instance of that special providence under which the Jews were placed. This enquiry was not referred to the examination and ingenuity of human judges, in discovering the truth, but was carried to the tribunal of God himself for his express decision. It is clear that there was nothing in the water itself, even when thus mixed, that could have such effect, or indeed any injurious effect at all. It was therefore drunk by the innocent with perfect safety. The effect upon the guilty was wholly supernatural, for the discovery and punishment of her who had thus offended. She might brave the trial, though conscious of her sin, in unbelief of the providence of God and expectation that the consequence would not follow, but

she would assuredly find that there was then a God in Israel, and that he would vindicate his own appointment. Every such instance was calculated to bring a most powerful conviction to the minds of all the Israelites, that God indeed ruled among them, and that his providence would in all cases fulfil his promises and execute his threatenings.

Secondly, we may observe that the express provision made in this case of appeal to himself marks in the strongest manner the guilt of Adultery. Not only was that sin against morals punished with death when discovered, but here was a particular mode of trial appointed for its detection when suspected, in which God thought it not below himself to act immediately as judge, and in which he inflicted a most alarming punishment upon the guilty offender. Surely this places the sin of adultery in a very peculiar light, and shews how exceeding sinful it is, even above most other immoralities, in the sight of God. It must always appear in the same light to him. He must always have the same hatred of it. And the gospel, so far from lowering the

standard of morals in any case, has raised it in all. In none more than in this. It tells us distinctly that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge:" "Be not deceived, neither fornicators nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Though no special providence now administers the affairs of the church, though no such enactment as the law of jealousy is now in force, yet shall these scriptures fall to the ground? shall not God mark the iniquity, and punish it? "Let no man deceive you with vain words; because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Let all then stand in fear of this great offence. And let the morals of all be so pure, their conduct so circumspect, their words so guarded, as not even to give any occasion for suspicion. For jealousy is the most tormenting and distressing of all passions to which the human heart is subject. Its consequences are also of the most dreadful

kind. Sometimes it produces a broken heart, that pines away in secret and silent sorrow. Sometimes it plunges its victim into the deepest criminality. Sometimes it has occasioned murder ; and not unfrequently suicide. Oh ! then beware of the sin ; beware of being even suspected of it. Nay remember that even in our own land the marriage ceremony is a *religious* ceremony ; that the marriage vows are vows made before God, in the presence of his priest, and at his holy altar ; and that God will be jealous of the vows which you have made on entering into the holy estate of matrimony.

Thirdly, This law would tend greatly to the preservation of the morals of the Jews in this important particular. Its influence upon the females must have been exceedingly great, especially when connected with their other laws for the preservation of female chastity. How careful and circumspect must every wife have been when she knew that she might at any time be subjected to such an ordeal even upon suspicion, and what shame and punishment, and what a miserable death was before

her, if she became guilty. Should she be detected *without* this appeal, she was to be stoned to death, as also her paramour. Should she be detected *upon* this appeal, you have heard what the judgment of God would be upon her. She could therefore scarcely expect to escape, if she were unfaithful. The knowledge of this would cause her to be watchful, to spurn every temptation, and to keep herself pure. It would have a powerful influence also over the other sex. Every man of common feeling would shrink from being the occasion of exposing a female to so unerring a test and so certain and dreadful a punishment. Besides, the Jews say, though this does not appear from the scripture, that the same punishment was also inflicted, by the judgment of God, on the adulterer as on the adulteress, in this case, as well as when their guilt was otherwise discovered. But even if this were not so, he could not but feel for the danger into which he would bring his partner in guilt, and fear the sting of a perpetually accusing conscience in case he should be the cause of her condemnation and death. And

moreover, whenever an instance of the execution of this law occurred, all who saw it, both male and female, would be deeply affected by it: the innocent would feel themselves yet more afraid of the sin, and if any other guilty persons were present they would be led to abstain from transgression for the future. All Israel would hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Thus the law of jealousy was well calculated to be a great preserver of the public virtue.

This law has now ceased, because that extraordinary providence by which it was executed has ceased. But is the Lord God therefore less observing of sin? Is it less hateful to him? Will he less certainly or severely punish it? Think not so. God's nature is unchangeable. He is ever the same pure and just and holy God. His threatenings against this sin and against every sin are as full and as frequent in the New Testament as in the Old. If the Old Testament telleth you that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," the gospel telleth you that "the wages of sin is death." There is

this difference ; God doth not punish so immediately and directly by his providence in this life as he was wont to do under the Jewish law : his punishments on sinners under the gospel are reserved for the other world, and they will then be eternal. I stated this fully in my last sermon. Let me repeat it again, let it be heard with the attention and awe and practical application, which so momentous a truth deserves, that “ we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may give an account of himself, and receive according to the things which he hath done whether they be good or bad.”

Let no one among you dare to sin secretly, either by the crime of adultery, or in any other way. Do you think that God does not see you ? You know he does. You know that darkness hideth not from him ; that he spies out all your ways ; that he knows all the thoughts that come into your mind, every one of them. Oh ! think of God’s all-seeing eye, which is at all times upon you. He is never absent from you ; he never sleeps ; you

and your ways, your acts, your words, your thoughts, are ever before him : whether you commit sin or wish to do it, whether you tempt or are tempted, whether the day beholds it, or the night covers it, all is beheld by him, “ all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom you have to do.” And the Lord God will discover it. True, he fixes no tribunal on earth for these discoveries ; he has now nothing like the water of jealousy, by which he may at present detect the *secret* sins of transgressors : but what says his word ? It says that the Lord “ will come, and will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.” It tells of a “ day in which God will judge the secrets of men :” then God shall “ bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil,” “ for there is nothing covered, that shall not then be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known.” Then can you think that you shall escape or elude this discovery ? No surely you cannot. Not more plainly did God make manifest the guilt of the adulteress under this law which

has been the subject of our consideration, than he will bring out the wickedness, however secret, of adulterers and adulteresses, and all other sinners of every kind, at the great day of judgment. "Some men's sins are open, going before to judgment, and some they follow after." Here your sin may never be known, but there it will assuredly be laid open; with whatever cunning and secrecy you may hide it here, "be sure your sin will find you out." And will your punishment be lighter than that which fell upon the guilty woman when she had drunk the bitter water? Alas, it will be inconceivably greater. It will be—I tremble to repeat the words, and you should tremble while you hear them—it will be the everlasting punishment of both body and soul in hell.

While this detection and punishment will assuredly happen to all who are guilty, however secret their sins may be kept in this world, those on the other hand, who labour under any *false* accusation, and are conscious of their innocence in the matter which is laid to their charge, may confidently commit their

cause to God. Any person may be accused unjustly, and it is not always that he has the means of clearing himself; hard suspicions therefore may for a long time rest upon him, and may even descend with him to his grave. During all the continuance of such a trial; he who is conscious of his integrity may possess his soul in patience. He may assure himself that either here or hereafter there will be the fulfilment of such a promise as this; "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in him; and he shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealing as the noon-day." Indeed it is a part, and no small one, of that persecution for righteousness sake which the servants of God have to endure, to have things laid to their charge which they know not, to have their good conversation in Christ falsely accused. There are those who will say all manner of evil against them falsely. But let those who thus suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls, yea and of their characters too, to him in well-doing, as unto

a faithful Creator. He will eventually “plead their cause, and execute judgment for them,” and “every tongue that shall rise against them in judgment they shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord.”

Lastly, let it be ever stated, and ever remembered, that all have now an atonement to which they may have recourse while their death and their final judgment are yet delayed. There is one to stand between a sinner and the judgment of God: “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.” Through the sacrifice of his death, and the merit of his righteousness, the most guilty may be pardoned. To him then let all repair, who are accused by their own consciences, and dare not that God should enter into judgment with them. Let them most humbly and penitently confess their sins unto the Lord, and they shall find mercy. The bitter water shall not be given them to drink, but on the contrary the water of life. And

when they have received this mercy, let them hear the voice of the Saviour himself, as he spake unto one accused of adultery before him ; “ Go, and sin no more.” Yea, let every pardoned sinner put away all his transgressions, renounce all the hidden things of dishonesty, nor allow himself in the indulgence of even one sin, whether open or secret.

Let it be remembered also that while the most guilty *may* have pardon, the most innocent needs it. In the strict sense of the word there are none innocent. They may be innocent of this or that particular offence, but there are none without sin : “ all have sinned.” Therefore, all need pardon : all need a Saviour. All must go and seek mercy at his hands. All must believe on him that they may be justified. All must repent of their sins ; all must forsake them. Otherwise none can escape destruction. All must perish.

SERMON XVII.

DIRECTIONS RESPECTING VOWS.

NUMBERS VI. 2, 3.

When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow the vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord : he shall separate himself from wine, and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, nor dried.

AMONG other religious acts of the Jews we find that *vows* were often made, and laws are laid down for their due regulation and discharge. These vows consisted of some solemn engagement voluntarily taken upon themselves by those who made them, or of the consecration of some person or thing to some particular use or service for the honour

of God. The Nazarite's vow, which is described in the chapter before us, was one of the most remarkable of these; but before I enter upon it, I shall make a few observations to you on vows in general, as they are spoken of, and directions given concerning them, in the sacred scriptures.

I. In the first place we find that there was no obligation laid upon the Israelites to make any vow. This is expressly stated in the twenty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, and the twenty-second verse, "If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin unto thee." In the next place it appears that nothing was to be considered binding as a vow, but what had been solemnly uttered by the voice. A mere thought, desire, intention, or purpose conceived in the heart, was not obligatory except it had gone out of the lips, as we read in the verse following the one just quoted; and hence the Psalmist says, "I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." But, in the third place, whenever the vow had been thus made, it must be

strictly fulfilled ; “ If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.” Neither should he delay the fulfilment of it : “ When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it ; for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee ; and it would be sin in thee.” Moreover, in the fourth place, the person vowing must have full power to accomplish his vow. If it was made by a minor or a wife, it was not binding, except the father in the one case, and the husband in the other, had heard and consented to it.

These vows, it appears, were made by the Jews on great and pressing occasions, as that some particular favour might be obtained, or in return for some special mercy, or when their minds were raised up to some extraordinary act of devotion and service. Thus Jacob vowed a vow, after his very remarkable dream at Bethel, and he said, “ If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and

raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace ; then shall the Lord be my God : and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house : and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give a tenth unto thee." Thus Jephthah vowed a vow that if God should deliver the Ammonites into his hands, whatsoever should come forth of the doors of his house to meet him, when he returned in peace; should surely be the Lord's. Thus Hannah vowed a vow unto the Lord, that if the Lord would give her a son, then she would give him unto the Lord all the days of his life. And Elkanah her husband ratified her vow, and Samuel was consecrated to the service of the Lord. So the Israelites vowed a vow unto the Lord against the Canaanites, and said, " If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities."

We find that it was a practice not uncommon among the Jews to vow some part of their property to God ; and the Lord, though he left them entirely at liberty to vow or not

to vow, yet warned them that they should not thus offer to him any thing that was mean and trifling and unworthy of his acceptance. Also it must not be any thing that arose from dishonest gain; neither was it to be the price of a dog, which was an animal utterly unfit for sacrifice; both which restrictions we read in Deut. xxiii. 18. And God, by the prophet Malachi, (i. 14,) pronounces a curse upon those who would impose upon him with a *corrupt* thing, "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great king, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

In the twenty-seventh chapter of Leviticus are the regulations under which certain things that had been vowed might be redeemed by money. Thus a person, an animal which was not allowable in sacrifice, a house, or a portion of land, might all be redeemed for money at their estimate and value, but generally with the addition of a fifth part of the estimation. Beasts proper for sacrifice might

not be redeemed, nor were they to be changed for any other whether better or worse.

All these vows were to be paid at Jerusalem only, for there was the place which the Lord did choose to put his name there; “thither,” he says, “shall ye bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave-offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill-offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks.” In Jerusalem was the place where all these offerings of their worship were to be made.

II. After these preliminary observations on vows in general, I now proceed to consider the Nazarite’s vow in particular, which forms the subject of my text, and indeed of nearly the whole of this sixth chapter of Numbers.

This vow was the dedication of a person to God, and was an extraordinary act of piety and devotion, taken up upon some particular account, or for some particular occasion. Some were under this obligatory vow for the whole period of their lives, as

Samuel, who was thus consecrated to God by his parents even before he was born ; also as Samson, who was expressly set apart by the Lord himself, declaring that he should be “ a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death ;” the Rechabites also had some part at least of this vow upon them by the charge of one of their ancestors ; and John the Baptist was thus separated for himself by God, saying, “ he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.” But in general the vow was not for the whole life, but only for some limited time, and for some special occasion. As soon as the time was ended and the object accomplished, the person freed himself from his vow by going through the ceremonies appointed for its discharge.

Now the *obligations* of the vow, as described in this chapter, were these.

1. A Nazarite was to abstain totally from wine, even from the fruit of the vine in every shape. This entire abstinence from

every thing intoxicating, was not only to ensure the better performance of their vow, but also to denote that full and perfect assent of the understanding with which they had engaged in it, and continued in its observance. It was to shew that their feelings were not excited by any artificial means, but that they were all along in the possession of the most perfect sobriety of mind, and that all was done with the full exercise and approval of their judgment, reason, and understanding. It was also expressive of their renunciation of the pleasures of the world, and all fleshly gratifications and indulgencies. They were men engaged to mortify their members which were on the earth, and to live in purity and holiness. It was in fact a more solemn taking up of that character and conduct which is now so powerfully and beautifully taught to us by the appearance of the grace of God in the gospel, “that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

2. Another token of his vow was that

the Nazarite should not shave his hair, but should suffer it to grow during all the time until his vow was fulfilled. In the peculiar case of Samson, who as we saw was to be a Nazarite unto the day of his death, all depended upon his hair being uncut. In that consisted his miraculous power and strength. When in his folly and sin he made known his secret, and was deprived of his hair, then he became weak as other men. But generally this appointment was to shew the disregard which such persons ought to have of all the pomps and vanities of the world, as the preceding was to shew their renunciation of the lusts of the flesh. It shewed that those who are separated to God more than others ought not to be taken up with dressing and ornamenting their persons, but to have their thoughts and hearts occupied by the great purpose and object of their high and holy calling. The whole of this matter depended entirely on its being the appointment of God, from which all outward ceremonies and institutions derive their importance and value. For when in the

Apostle's days, some men wore long hair, this was a proof of their effeminacy and foppery, and met with his severe reproof as being a shame to them. From such different motives and to such different purposes may the same outward appearance be assumed, or ceremony used.

3. Thirdly, the Nazarite was to take care that during all the time of his separation, he did not render himself ceremonially unclean by the touch of any dead body, or by mourning for the dead. He was to place even the affections and feelings of nature under restraint, nor touch the corpse of his father or mother, the persons most dear to his heart, and to whom he was bound in duty to give every possible token of respect. This was to shew the absolute manner in which the Nazarite's thoughts were to be separated from all earthly things ; and seems to have been of the same import as these sayings of our Lord, " If any man love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me ;" " let the dead bury their dead but follow thou me." Any particular call of God sets aside

common duties for the time : and so we find that in these several particulars, there was a considerable degree of similarity between the Nazarite and the high priest ; for he too must drink neither wine nor strong drink, nor make any mourning for the dead, nor defile himself by the touch of any dead body.

4. Lastly, this contraction of uncleanness might happen unavoidably. To drink wine, to cut off his hair, or allow it to be cut off, could scarcely happen except by his own act, or through his own fault : but it is probable enough that a person might suddenly be taken ill, and while the Nazarite was supporting him, might die in his arms, or in various other ways he might unwittingly touch a dead body. Even this exposed him to great inconvenience. All the time that he had been previously observing his vow was lost. He must remain unclean for seven days, as was the law to all who thus contracted uncleanness ; on the seventh day he was to shave his head, as having all his vow to begin again ; on the eighth he was to bring a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a

trespass-offering, and the priest was to make an atonement for him; and then he was again to sanctify his head in that day, that is, he was to begin the time of his separation afresh. What a call does this afford you to walk circumspectly, to watch and be sober, to endure unto the end, to hold fast the profession of your faith stedfast without wavering, and to take care not to lose the things which you have already wrought!

But I must now state to you the *ceremonies* which were to be observed when the time of the Nazarite's vow was completed, and he was to be discharged from his obligations. He was then to be brought to the door of the tabernacle; he was to offer a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, a ram with a basket of unleavened bread consisting of cakes mingled with oil and wafers anointed with oil for a peace-offering, and along with all these a meat-offering and a drink-offering as prescribed by the law. These were intended as thankful acknowledgments of the grace and goodness of God by which he had been disposed to

make, and enabled to perform his vow; yet accompanied with a sin-offering for all his imperfection and failure in the performance of it. Besides these he was to offer free-will-offerings of that which his hand should get, that is, of what he was able. As some might scarcely be able to procure these offerings for the discharge of their vow, it seems to have been the case for others, benevolent persons, who approved of the object and motives for which the vow had been made, to join with them for the purpose of bearing the charges, and for that purpose to take the same vow upon themselves a few days preceding the time of discharge, and for that short time St. Paul seems to have availed himself of this custom, by the advice of James and the elders at Jerusalem, when it was necessary that he should shew that, as a Jew, he had a suitable regard to the appointments of the law.

These offerings being made, the Nazarite was to shave his head. For, as the suffering the hair to grow was the peculiar sign or bond of the covenant into which he had

entered, so the act of cutting off the hair denoted that the engagement being performed the bond was cancelled. The hair thus cut off was to be burned, not on the altar, but in the fire under the sacrifice of peace-offerings. From another instance recorded of St. Paul it seems, that the requirement of performing this ceremony at the sanctuary was, at least in some cases, dispensed with, for we read that he had shorn his head at Cenchrea, which was the port of Corinth, for he had a vow. How far the Jews had made the law of God void by their traditions in this respect I undertake not to say, but they are expressly charged by our Lord with this offence in another case of their vows, namely when they excused themselves from supporting their aged and infirm parents by saying that they had consecrated to God, or made Corban, what should otherwise be appropriated to them.

Finally, the priest was to wave the sodden shoulder of the ram, with a cake and a wafer, in the sight of all the people, and these, along with the usual wave-breast and

heave-shoulder, being given as the portion of the priest, the Nazarite was discharged from his vow, and all its obligations.

The Nazarite's vow and its ceremonies have ceased; but the general duty of devoting ourselves to God is in full force, far more explicitly demanded, and founded upon most powerful obligations and motives. The gospel says, "Ye are bought with a price," and it tells us most clearly that that price is the blood of Christ, and upon this purchase of us by Christ it founds the duty, "Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his." It inculcates an entire separation from the world in all its erroneous principles, its vain pleasures, its ambitious projects, and sinful works. Its language is, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty." In that apostolic injunction there is evident allusion to the Nazarite's separation and danger of uncleanness, and it is thus that all

the ceremonies of the law are used to enforce the inward spirituality and holiness of the gospel.

But besides the general duty of self-dedication to God, surely we should feel that the vows of God are upon us, and the tenor of those vows is wholly to the same effect. What are the words and what the purport of our baptismal vow? They are no other than these, that we renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, that we believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and that we will keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life. We are therefore, as it were, Nazarites from our birth, at least from our baptism, and the term of our separation is, like that of Samson, to the day of our death. These vows are renewed in confirmation, in which ceremony of the Christian church they are publicly and solemnly taken up by our young people in their own name. They are repeated again and again in the Sacrament of the Lord's supper. The meaning,

310 DIRECTIONS RESPECTING VOWS.

I say, of all these sacred covenants is that we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, that we devote ourselves to God and his service, and that we are bound by our vows to the end of our lives.

And now we should vow and pay. We should be observant of our Christian engagements. Looking upon ourselves as devoted to the Lord, we should be his faithful soldiers and servants: But ever aware of our own sinfulness and weakness, we should continually bring the atoning sacrifice of Christ for all our transgressions and deficiencies, and pray for grace and strength from above to enable us to keep the vow and covenant under which we are. May the Lord God help us by his Holy Spirit to live unto him unreservedly, till we are discharged by death from all our earthly service.

SERMON XVIII.

THE PRIEST'S BLESSING.

NUMBERS VI. 24, 25, 26.

*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee : the Lord
make his face shine upon thee, and be
gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up his
countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

VERY important is the office which is borne by the ministers of religion. Their duty is to minister in holy things, between God and the people. They are ambassadors for God ; they are to announce his will, and proclaim his salvation. A dispensation is laid upon them to preach his gospel, and woe be to them if they do not fulfil it. It is their part also to “ reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” It is also theirs to open the promises of God in Christ, to shew to penitents the way of pardon and

peace, to comfort the broken-hearted, to strengthen the feeble-minded, to build up the church of God in faith and holiness. It belongs to them officially to declare the curse of God upon all unholy and sinful livers, all infidel and impious rejecters of Christ, so long as they continue impenitent; and on the contrary to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. It belongs to them also, as the accredited servants of God, to bless, in his name, all his faithful and obedient servants.

This we have already seen was a specific part of the office of Aaron and his sons. When I was expounding a part of the ninth chapter of the book of Leviticus, I shewed you how Moses and Aaron came out of the tabernacle and blessed the people; and I observed to you then that this was a stated part of the priest's office, as you may see in Deuteronomy, the twenty-first chapter and fifth verse, and again in the first book of Chronicles, the twenty-third chapter and thirteenth verse. I then also noticed to you

that we should afterwards find this form given by which the priests under the law were to bless the people ; also I observed that the divine Saviour thus blessed his disciples when he left them at his ascension into heaven ; and that our own church has introduced this very form, which stands as my text, into her appointed office for the visitation of the sick, while other apostolic forms are used in other parts of her services. Let it not be supposed that the grace of the benediction necessarily accompanies the use of the words. It rests only upon those in whom there is a meetness for its reception : to such it is addressed on the part of God, and as the words are spoken he dispenses the grace, confirming what is thus said by his minister on earth by his own power and mercy in heaven. The minister pronouncing the blessing is the instrument, the *appointed* instrument however, be it remembered, by whom God is pleased to communicate it. The minister has a delegated authority in this respect, an authority placed in him by the God of grace. He cannot exercise this

authority at his own will ; he cannot bless those whom God hath not blessed, neither can he curse those whom God hath not cursed : nevertheless as he pronounces the curse of God on the wicked, the impenitently wicked, the profane, and ungodly, God ratifies that sentence in his own courts above ; and again, as he pronounces the blessing, the converted and the holy have it confirmed to them in heaven, from whence it descends in mercy and grace upon their souls. Our Lord himself gives a clear statement of this matter in the commission which he gave to the seventy when he sent them forth, two and two, before him, (Luke x.) “ Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it : if not, it shall turn to you again.” When the same directions were given to the twelve, it was said, “ If the house be worthy ;” both which expressions shew that if the family were pious, and of a disposition to love and receive Christ, his servants, and his gospel, the peace so pronounced would be confirmed

unto them. Thus when we, in the name of God, pronounce any of our scriptural blessings upon you in the official exercise of our ministerial office, if your souls be gracious, and your hearts be right, and you be spiritual and converted persons, the blessing pronounced will rest upon you, and you will be blessed with it indeed.

As in the days of superstition and popery there was far too great regard paid to the mere pronouncing of the words of the curse or the blessing by the mouth of the priest, out of which many serious evils of false doctrine and corrupt practice arose ; so in these days of laxity of discipline and depreciation of the ministerial office and character, there is, I think, too great a disregard to these official declarations of God's appointed servants. But as a dutiful and pious child properly feels the value of a solemn blessing of a holy parent, and attaches much importance to it, desires to receive it, and cherishes the thought of it when it has been received, so the humble and pious Christian should value the public blessing of his appointed

minister, should believe that it will be attended with the specified grace to his soul, should put his mind into a right frame to receive it, and should trust that it will be unto him as the Lord hath said by his servant.

I now proceed to consider the particulars of the blessing appointed to be used in the Jewish church, which is the subject of my present sermon.

I. The first clause in this blessing speaks of the constant protection and kind care which God will have over his people; "The Lord bless and keep thee." Now every person of an enlightened mind, who is acquainted with himself, his sin, and weakness, will know how great this blessing is, and how much he stands in need of it. He will know by painful experience that he cannot keep himself; and therefore this part of the benediction will be the constant desire of his heart. It comprises the protection of his body, with which he daily walks in the midst of innumerable unseen dangers, and which is crushed sooner than the moth. It comprehends also the protection of his soul

in all its spiritual concerns. Oh ! read how beautifully this divine protection of both body and soul is expressed in the hundred and twenty-first Psalm, “ My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved : he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper ; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth for evermore.” What is it that the Christian believer may expect under this part of the blessing, but that the Lord will ‘ please to save and defend him in all dangers ghostly and bodily, and keep him from all sin and wickedness, and from his ghostly enemy and from everlasting death?’ What but that the Lord will keep him in his own faith and fear, “ and preserve him from every evil work unto his heavenly kingdom?”

It is the gift of that protection which is so frequently prayed for in the collects of our church, as in these words, ‘ Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls ; that we may be defended from all adversities that may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord :’ and again, ‘ Keep, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy church with thy perpetual mercy : and because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Nay it is the fulfilment of the prayer of the blessed Jesus himself when on earth, “ Holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me.” Hearing then of so great a blessing bestowed on us from the Lord, we may well say, in the language of the Apostle Jude, “ Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with

exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever."

II. The second part of this blessing is in these words, "The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious to thee." This expression of the Lord's making his face to shine seems to me to be always expressive of that *favour* which God delights to shew to his people, and is therefore to the same purport as the second clause, "and be gracious unto thee." Now we need the favour of God, and might well fear that we never could enjoy it. For why should he favour *us*? We have fallen away from him into sin and the service of his great adversary, the devil; we are enemies to him by wicked works, and our deeds are evil; we have broken his laws, and our transgressions are multiplied. Why then should he shew us favour? If he does, it is of his own *grace*. And we know that every expression or act of favour towards this our lost and sinful world is altogether of grace. By grace we are saved from first to last. Of his own grace

he sent us his Son, and gives us his Spirit. Through his grace we are called and accepted, sanctified and preserved. The foundation of our restoration to favour with God was laid in his grace; and when the topstone of salvation shall be brought forth with shoutings, the cry shall be, "Grace Grace to it." Now this is the blessing here pronounced. "The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." The Lord grant thee his favour, and return to thee in mercy, and pour out the fulness of his grace upon thee. How rich is this blessing also! There is in *it*, as indeed there is in each of the three, a fulness which seems to comprise in itself every temporal and spiritual good, and may well teach us, who are Christians, to expect from his grace the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

III. The third part of the blessing is in these words, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." I find that as the shining of the Lord's face is expressive of his favour to his accepted people, so the lifting up of his countenance

is uniformly connected with peace, and gladness, and joy of heart. Thus, "Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." "Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." And again, "Thou shalt fill me full of joy with thy countenance." "Blessed are they that know the joyful sound, they shall walk O Lord in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." This blessing therefore is of the same import as that of the Apostle Paul, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Now what a blessing is this! to have peace with God, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! These are the blessings of God's true and spiritual people in all ages. Oh!

that they may be yours. May you be enabled to rejoice in Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and may "the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means."

Before I proceed to any direct application let me observe to you that it is thought by many that there is a reference in this passage to the great doctrine of the Trinity. It is well known that the Jews conceived that there was some mystery hidden under this threefold repetition of the name Jehovah. And certainly the coincidence in this particular, as well as in the *terms of the blessing*, between this form of the ancient church and some of those in the New Testament; may well lead us to such a conclusion. Thus St. Paul says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." So also St. John says, "Grace be unto you and peace from him which is and which was and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ." I do not say that

this form of the blessing would of itself constitute a proof of that scripture doctrine ; but since God has been pleased to reveal himself as actually subsisting in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, while yet he is but one God, we may then see the reason why this blessing is given in this triple form. And surely it is a great confirmation to the faith, and hope, and joy, of a true and enlightened Christian, to know that every person of the Godhead is interested and engaged in blessing him.

And now let me remind you how earnestly *you* should desire these spiritual blessings. They are great things indeed which the Lord has here promised to bestow, and your souls should be full of the most ardent longing after them. Little and trifling are all the possessions of earth in comparison of them, and yet so it is that these very spiritual blessings involve in them a sufficiency of the things of earth, with security, content, and happiness in the possession and enjoyment of them : for, “ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things shall be added unto you."

These blessings are not the preliminary blessings of repentance, faith, and conversion to God, but such as are bestowed upon those who are already penitents, believers, and new creatures. They are blessings bestowed upon the Lord's people. Many therefore are not in a state to receive them: "the Son of peace is not there." These ought to think of their unhappy state, and that they are precluded from the reception of these mercies of protection, favour, and peace. But why are they precluded? Because their hearts are not right with God: because they have not embraced the covenant of mercy in Christ Jesus. They must therefore repent and be converted. They must pray for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. They must turn to God with all earnestness, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with their whole heart. Thus they will in due time become partakers of all the blessings with which the Lord blesses his faithful people.

Such of the servants of the Lord as feel

themselves in peculiar danger of falling, or have doubts of his favour towards them, or have little of peace and comfort in their souls, should pay peculiar regard to this text and subject. They should look upon it as a cloud ready to pour out its enriching and enlivening shower upon their parched and thirsty souls. They should raise their expectations to meet it with an enlargement of desire and hope. Especially they should wait upon the ministrations of his accredited ministers. They officially pronounce the blessing of God upon his people. Let them therefore ever put themselves in the way of its reception. What is said of the house of God with respect to *one* of these blessings, "In this house will I give peace," belongs to them all. Therefore they are to be looked for in the house of God, and from the mouth of him who officiates in it on the behalf of God. And here let me notice what has often struck me as a great mark of levity and carelessness in many in our congregations. When the morning or evening prayers are about to be concluded with one of the richest and sweetest

forms of blessing that can be conceived, there is often observable a peculiar restlessness, an unbecoming haste to rise from their knees, a putting aside or changing of books ; all or any of which things shew that the mind is not waiting for the blessing, nor hoping to receive it. At a time when attention of mind, arrangement of thought, and elevation of soul, should be peculiarly present, they often seem to be most wanting. While the minister in his official capacity is saying "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore," some appear to be less attentive, less in a waiting frame, than perhaps in any other part of the service. How then can they expect that the blessing should rest with *them*? They seem rather themselves to put it from them, as not valued, or not hoped for. It therefore becomes to them, exactly what they themselves thus make it to be, a form of words without any power, and nothing more.—The same, or even worse irreverence and hurry to be gone, is observable at the close of the sermon, when another

scriptural blessing is used. I am going to pronounce that blessing, as my usual custom is, almost immediately ; and I pray you, who are of a spiritual mind, to look to the Lord with all seriousness, and reverence, and hope, that so he may set his seal to the words spoken. Let me also desire those, who perhaps cannot now be considered to be suitable recipients of so great a blessing, to reflect how much they lose by their own unpreparedness of spirit, that at length, through the grace of Christ, they may earnestly desire that preparation of heart which is from the Lord, and become partakers, as well as others, of all his blessings.

SERMON XIX.

MOSES'S INVITATION TO HOBAB.

NUMBERS x. 29.

We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come with us, and we will do thee good : for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

WONDERFUL is the change which the soul experiences when it has turned unto the Lord. It feels that it has chosen the good part, and enjoys the utmost satisfaction and comfort in reflecting upon the state into which God by his grace has brought it, and the prospects which are opened to its view. I do not mean to say that this is its experience immediately upon its turning to the Lord ; for some time most probably it will be in a state of suspense and uncertainty ; it will fear to rank itself among those who are

truly converted, and to take to itself the privileges of the people of Christ. Yet though the operations of the Spirit are very various, and great difference will be found in the particular experience of different saints, yet generally, sooner or later, they are brought to take the greatest pleasure in their lot, as they ever approve most cordially of the way in which they are walking.

This being the case, they desire that others should have the same blessings as themselves. Seeing the necessity, the usefulness, the happiness, the good, of living unto God, they will ardently long to bring all they can into the same blessedness. Especially they will be anxious for their relations and friends, and many will be their desires, many their prayers, and many their persuasions, to induce those to go with them in their journey towards heaven. As they can do it with prospect of success, they will warn them of the danger and misery of worldly courses ; they will endeavour to prevail on them by stating the blessedness of religion ; their hearts will grieve, but not despair, if they

fail for a length of time, and when at last they succeed, as very oft they do, then their souls rejoice more than those who divide the spoil.

Moses was on his way with the children of Israel to the land of Canaan, the fertile land which God had promised them, when he met in the wilderness with Hobab, his wife's brother. He wished to take him along with him. He knew that Hobab could be of some use to him in their journey through the wilderness from his acquaintance with it, and he desired that this his relation might have a portion also in their promised blessings. "We are journeying," he tells him, "to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come with us and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

I do not now think it necessary to quote those scriptures to you in which God had made over the grant of this land to Abraham and to his seed after him ; nor yet those promises in which the Lord had *spoken* good, or those instances in which he had *done* good

to Israel as a *nation*; but taking the journey of that people through the wilderness to Canaan, as a representation of the believer's spiritual pilgrimage towards heaven, his promised land of rest and enjoyment, I shall make it my business, as my duty is, to endeavour to persuade you all to set out in earnest as pilgrims towards Zion ; and oh ! that the good Lord the Spirit may render the persuasion effectual.

The life of truly religious people is often, as you know, my brethren, compared to a journey ; and the comparison indeed is a very fit one. They are journeying towards heaven, and passing through this present wilderness world in their way to it. They do not consider themselves as having taken up a permanent residence here ; they are strangers and sojourners only. The beautiful and scriptural Allegory of the Pilgrim's Progress represents them as on their way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City ; and the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that the patriarchs and saints of old time all confessed that they were strangers and

pilgrims on the earth, declaring plainly that they sought a country, not mindful of that from which they came out, otherwise they might have had opportunity to have returned, but desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Such is the view which Christians have of their situation here. They desire not to be taken up with the pursuits of this present world, but to be making all the way they can to another and a better. They wish to turn their backs on the trifles, follies, and sins, of a world which is appointed to be consumed by fire, to set their faces Zionwards, and to press forward towards that kingdom which can never be moved. They have not set out upon a hazard to seek a settlement they know not where, or uncertain whether they shall find it; but they are journeying unto the place of which God hath said that he will give it them. In one respect believers are like the great father of the faithful who left his father's house not knowing whither he went, inasmuch as they know not fully the nature of the place which they are seeking, nor what themselves shall be in it, for "eye

hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," when they have attained to their promised rest; but they are under no uncertainty as to its existence, or their final access to it; for God hath said, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty." They journey therefore in assured hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie hath promised them, depending upon his sure promise, and covenant-oath, two immutable things, by which he hath engaged that he will bring them at length to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and whose maker is God," and give them their settlement in the heavenly inheritance, where "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." All they have to do is to maintain their course, to travel forward with their pilgrim's staff and shoes, to have their minds set upon the country to which they are going, to pursue the track

which leads to it, and ere long they will be brought to the edge of Jordan, the river of death, which being once safely crossed, will land them on the shores of the kingdom of peace, and joy, and holiness. There their journey will be ended, and they will take up a fixed and eternal abode in the presence and enjoyment of their God and Saviour.

Your minister, and several of your present fellow-hearers, profess that this is their purpose and plan. They say, that they are seeking a country. Their first desire and object is to secure a portion in that blessed place which is the inheritance of the saints in light; and to arrive at that Mount Zion above where dwell the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and God the judge of all, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, whom having not seen they love, and with whom they desire hereafter to be. Here they perceive they have no continuing city, therefore they are seeking one which is to come, desiring to be made citizens of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. They set their

affections on things above, and not on things below, and look not at the things which are seen and are temporal, but at the things which are unseen and are eternal. Thus they are journeying towards the place of which God hath said, that he will give it to them, often indeed greatly oppressed by the enemies of their way, often sadly perplexed and sore bestead, often self-condemned for failing in simplicity of intention and zeal and earnestness, too often loitering by the way and betrayed by some trifling and delusive vanity, yet again recovering themselves, and pressing forward with vigour and resolution; and upon the whole still persevering, and drawing nearer and nearer to the desired end. I am not describing what the case ought to be, but what it really is: not what is their duty, but their actual experience. “Faint yet pursuing” may be their motto, for whatever oppositions they may meet with, or whatever infirmities of nature they may struggle with, or whatever falls in the way they may have to lament and grieve for, yet they will not lay aside their pilgrim’s

life, but they keep enduring to the end. They know that if they hold on their way they shall at length *attain* to its end. They look forward to the glory that shall be revealed, and depend upon the fulfilment of the Lord's promise. They experience great satisfaction of mind as they are making good progress, and are animated by the assurance that when their journey is accomplished, they shall cease from their labours, and rest for ever with the Lord. This we profess to be our plan and purpose. We are aiming to get to heaven. We live not for this present world ; but our main concern is how we may live so as to secure a happier. Our primary object is to be going on our way towards God, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

And now we invite *you* to go with us. We are journeying to the place of which God hath said, I will give it you. Come with us ; be of our party ; join yourselves to our company ; become fellow-pilgrims along with us ; ask the way to Zion with your faces thitherwards, saying, as we invite you to

accompany us, yes, we will join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant; we too will journey towards this blessed place; we will go and seek the Lord, and his glorious kingdom. “Come with us, and we will do thee good,” is what Moses said to Hobab. If you ask, what good is that which Christians will do to you if you accompany them in their pious march? We answer, they will do you good in the way, and good at the end.

1. Good in the way. *Their conversation* will be of use to you as you pass along it with them. They are acquainted with the things of God, and they love to speak much and often to one another of Jesus and his salvation. It is *very edifying* to hear them tell of the gracious dealings of the Lord, of his holy ways, of his righteous precepts, and of the manner in which Christians should walk so as to please him. They can and they will advise and counsel you in many difficulties, they will explain to you many parts of the word of God, and afford you direction where you are yourself ignorant. They will help to remove your errors, and to

clear up your doubts, and bring you into a full acquaintance with all the truth of the gospel. Their conversation is also *very animating*. It mutually strengthens their hearts, and encourages them to hold on their way. It communicates a life and vigour to the soul which warms, and cheers, and invigorates it, which makes it more resolute in cleaving unto God, more zealous, more simple, and sincere. The conversation of Christian friends is also *very full of comfort*. One after another in the intimacy of private friendship will tell you of their trials, of their doubts, their fears, and anxieties; what mercies the Lord has shewn them, how he has helped them, how he has supported them. You will find the experience of many according with your own, and while they open their hearts to you, and you do the same to them, you will find a union of soul with them which is most pleasant, and a lightening of the mind with a solacing of the spirit which is of unspeakable comfort. How useful must all this be! How much better than the continual repetition of frivolous and un instructive discourse

which you have in the world, which can neither edify the soul, nor comfort the heart.—*Their example* also will do you good. You will see how they live, and learn to live like them. You will behold their good works, and do yourselves the same. You will be followers of them, as they follow Christ, and seeing in each one something deserving of imitation, you will transcribe their excellencies into your own practice. Their example will shew you that it is no impossible thing to serve the Lord, and while they also are going, you will be the more encouraged to go along with them.—*Their prayers* too will do you good; for Christians pray often and fervently with and for each other. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” in behalf of his brother, and the united supplications and intercessions of God’s people draw down mercies and graces upon the head of each individual. These are some things, and if time allowed, many more might be mentioned, in which, if you will come along with us, we will do you good in the way.

2. Also good at the end. When the

labour is over, rest succeeds. When the journey is finished, home is gained. They who by a patient continuance in well doing have sought for glory and honour and immortality, shall obtain eternal life, and receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. A crown of righteousness is laid up for all the faithful followers of the Lamb which the Lord the righteous judge shall give them at that day; and not for them only, but also for all those who love his appearing. If you become companions of them in time, you shall be their companions in eternity, and partake of their blessed portion in the kingdom of God. What good is this! When rightly estimated, it is that which should be the principal object of our whole lives. It is that which nothing earthly and temporal can in any degree balance. Heaven is good indeed; unmixed and unremitted and unceasing. This good shall be done to you, if ye will come with us on the way to God. Good in the way, and heaven, the best good, at the end, is what the Lord provides for his pilgrims. The

present is experienced in earnest, and the future will follow as the harvest does the first-fruits. The word of him who cannot lie is passed. The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. He hath blessed his people ; and numerous are the passages in his holy word, in which he hath recorded that blessing. That covetous-minded and wicked prophet Balaam knew it, and felt that, in spite of his wishes, he could not withhold it. “ Behold I have received commandment to bless : and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel : the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them : God brought them out of Egypt ; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.” “ Happy art thou, O Israel !” saith God in the book of Deuteronomy, “ who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thine excellency. The eternal God is thy refuge,

and underneath are the everlasting arms.” As he said unto the patriarchs, when he called them to enter on the life of faith; so saith he to each of those who tread in their faithful steps, “ I will surely do thee good, and I will bring thee to the land which I have promised thee.” In full contemplation of the mercies privileges and blessings enjoyed by the people of God, the psalmist prayed, and our desire too should be the same, “ Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people; oh! visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.”

Thus we set before you the advantages which attend upon a life of godliness: and we say to you, in the language of Moses, and of every true pilgrim towards the kingdom of heaven, “ We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”

And now is there ever a Ruth in this

congregation? one ready to say with that excellent young woman of old, “where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” Oh! that there were such a heart in many of you, that you would fear the Lord, and serve him, that you would turn to him, and walk with him in a sincere and holy life, for that should be for your good always. I say always, both now and eternally. Let me persuade you to come with us, nor give the Redeemer cause to say “they will not come unto me, that they may have life.” He invites you, the word invites you, your minister and Christian acquaintances invite you. The Spirit and the Bride say come, come with us, and we will do you good. Oh! that many of you may have grace to accept the invitation, yea that many taking hold of the skirts of the travellers of Zion, may say, “we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Let not the hearts of our young converts fail them for fear, nor be discouraged by reason of the length of the way. The way will grow

easier, the further you advance in it. I should rather say, your strength will grow greater, and your Christian affections and purposes be more confirmed and established. With special supports and precious promises the Lord will sustain you, and foretastes of the heaven which you seek will afford you encreasing encouragement. The world, and the foolish ones of the world, will also entice you. They will say, come with us, and enjoy our pleasures; we sit down to eat and to drink, and we rise up to play; we are lovers of pleasure, are careless and gay as the day is long, and disturb not ourselves with futurity. "My son," saith the book of Proverbs, "walk not thou in the way with *them*, refrain thy foot from *their* path;" for *they* will do thee no good, nay rather they will bring unhappiness on thee here, and ruin thy soul hereafter.

Let the aged pilgrims hold on their way, encouraging the weak, confirming the doubtful, and inviting all to join their pious march. Tell them of the great things which God has done for you, and the great good with which he has already blessed you, and bring up a

good report of the land which is before you. With your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand, travel steadily and eagerly on, as men in haste to be prosecuting their journey, having their minds intent upon making the best of their way. “Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning,” and ye like men looking for and hasting unto the kingdom which God has reserved for them that love him. Oh! my aged companions towards the kingdom of heaven, may the Lord, our blessed master and leader, strengthen us on our way to it. May he quicken our spiritual eye to a brighter sight of it, as the eye of our bodies grows more dim. May he open the ear of the soul to hear more of its joyful sounds, as the songs of praise on earth, and the conversation of Christian friends, and the exhortations and encouragements of ministers, are less distinctly heard. May he strengthen our feeble knees, and animate our fainting hearts, that, old as we are and incapable of bodily exertion, we may yet in spirit “mount with wings as eagles, may run and not be weary, may walk and not faint.”

Oh! you who are *of* the world, as well as *in* the world, how can I leave you thus in that waste howling wilderness? How can I leave you in a state in which nothing but future misery is awaiting you? Do you not know that that individual who had as large a portion of this world's wealth honour and power, as ever fell to the lot of man, and as great opportunities of enjoying them, and who withheld not his heart from any joys which the world could give, has left this record stamped upon them in indelible characters, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Can you not believe that testimony? Can you not believe the word of a greater than Solomon, who asks, "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Oh! my dear friends, be assured that there is no real good for man but in God, and in the place which God has promised to them that love and fear him. To that place, I have said, some of us profess to be journeying. Oh! "come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

SERMON XX.

THE ISRAELITES DESIRE FLESH.

NUMBERS XI. 4.

*And the mixt multitude that was among them
fell a lusting : and the children of Israel
also wept again, and said, Who shall give
us flesh to eat ?*

WHEN Israel went out of Egypt a mixed multitude went out with them, as we read in the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. Most of these were probably connected with the Israelites by intermarriages, of which we have already seen one instance in the case of that blasphemer, the son of an Egyptian and of an Israelitish woman, who was stoned to death for his sin. It may well be supposed that these would be the first to be dissatisfied with the privations and difficulties of the journey through the wilderness, the first to regret

their departure from Egypt, and to desire a return, and consequently the first to murmur against Moses and against God. These are feelings which soon communicate themselves to others. We are all more prone to be influenced by evil communications than by good ones, and neglecting those who would provoke us to love and good works, we listen to any roots of bitterness springing up among us, and thereby become defiled. Such was the case in the narrative before us: the mixt multitude fell a lusting and murmuring, and the Israelites caught the contagion, and followed their evil ways.

I. In the first place we will consider this sin of the people. It appeared in their ungrateful dissatisfaction with the food which God hath provided for them. This was the Manna, given by a continued miracle, sufficient to support their strength and gratify their taste. But though they were eating angel's food, they were discontented with it. They wanted variety: "There is nothing at all," say they, "beside this Manna." They speak of it in the most contemptuous manner;

“ nothing but *this* Manna.” Thus they spake of that which exhibited to them a series of miracles every week, and upon which they had subsisted so long without having had any sick or feeble among them. They said that their soul was dried away, but it was dried away only by their own discontented and murmuring spirit, which ever makes the bounties of God to be of no avail, and takes away at once both the sweetness and the nourishment which are found in them by the thankful heart.—In further contempt of it they magnify the provisions which they had had in Egypt. “ We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely ; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks and the onions, and the garlic.” What a remembrance was this ! What a perversion of the faculty of memory ! They remembered this profusion of dainties, as they now professed to esteem them, but they forgot the brick-kilns, and the taskmaster’s whip, and all the sufferings of their bondage under which they sighed and cried. See what perverseness of temper there was in them, which could make them

thus contrast their present with their former lot.—They lusted after flesh. They cried out, who shall give us flesh to eat? Here were two sins, one in their dissatisfaction with the food which was provided for them, and another in their distrust of God's power and goodness. . While the Lord thus gave them day by day their daily bread, they might well have eaten it with gladness and singleness of heart; and while they saw that that food was sent to them from the hand of God, they might be sure that he could as easily change the kind of it, if it so pleased him. But this is a picture of human nature. Fallen man is a discontented being. Having forsaken his proper rest, he is uneasy and dissatisfied. Having rejected his all-sufficient portion, he frets under any other. Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, he finds that the cisterns which he has hewn out for himself, can hold no water. He is therefore continually coveting something which he has never possessed, or murmuring about something which he has lost. And these repinings are scarcely ever for the want of necessary

or beneficial things, but for such as are dangerous and hurtful, provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. My friends, let us look into our own hearts. Then we shall have less astonishment at the Israelites. We may be conscious that we have often complained of the allotments of the wise and gracious providence of God, with as much folly as the Israelites are doing here. We have lusted after evil things, as they also lusted. We have desired what, if God had given it to us, would have been for our hurt, as perhaps in some cases we have actually found it to be. Let us learn then to watch over our own hearts. Let us repress the emotions of desire for what we have not. Let us be content with such things as we have. Let us learn to be satisfied in whatever state we are, both in the station in which God has placed us, and with the provision that he makes for us.

II. I proceed now, in the second place, to consider the consequences of this murmuring. We read in the tenth verse, “ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their

families, every man in the door of his tent : and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly ; Moses also was displeased.” Nothing could be more just than that the anger of the Lord should be kindled greatly, for nothing could be more ungrateful, perverse, and rebellious. They set at naught the great deliverance which he had wrought for them, and thought more of their fish and their leeks and onions, than of that redemption from their house of bondage which he had effected by a series of most stupendous miracles. They quarrelled with the food which he was daily bestowing upon them, eagerly desired that which was more agreeable to their carnal appetite, and tempted him to a further miraculous display of his power, by providing flesh for them in a place where none was to be had. Thus as the Psalmist says, “They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.” Well might God be provoked with all this wickedness. Brethren, it is very sinful and very displeasing to God to be dissatisfied with the appointments of his

providence. All that he gives us he might withhold, and we should have no reason to complain, for we are not worthy of the least of his mercies. We forget our place, our dependance, our character, we forget ourselves altogether when we entertain a thought of prescribing to him what he ought to give us, and murmur if we have it not. We wholly forget who and what we are, and who and what he is, when we thus repine and complain of any of his dispensations and dealings. By this we provoke him exceedingly, making a kind of dictation to him how we should be dealt with, and presuming that we have claims upon his bounty, and may reasonably expect more than he is pleased to give us. This is moreover an impeachment of his wisdom and goodness : as if he did not know what is fit for us, or was unwilling to bestow it. It is a depreciation of his character, whether we regard him as the God, or the Father, of his creatures. Let us beware then of thus provoking the Lord to anger. Let us not tempt God by requiring meat for our lusts. Let us look for richer blessings.

Let us covet the best gifts. Let us set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.

But Moses also was displeased. He had great cause to be displeased. Their murmurings and rebellion were directed against him as well as against God, for he was God's instrument in their guidance and their ruler for God. In this Moses sinned not. But we may not say so of his feelings towards God. There is evidence of a complaining spirit in his expostulations with the Lord: there is evidence that he felt an irritation of temper. He complains that God afflicted him, that he was not favourable to him, that he laid too much burden upon him. He observes that he stood in no such relation to them, as that he should have all the trouble and care of them all the way to Canaan. He arrogates too much to himself, when he says, "Whence should *I* have flesh to give to all this people?" And he offends greatly when he puts it to God even to kill him out of hand, rather than afflict him and burden him thus. Alas, my brethren, what is man!

We cannot find one righteous, no, not one. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Here is Moses, the great lawgiver, himself transgressing the spirit of his own law; here is he falling under its condemnation. Even he needs to bring the atonement. Had not that law been accompanied with sacrifices, through which he might look by faith to the one great expiation of the Son of God, there had been no resource even for him against that curse which is pronounced against every one who "continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

III. Let us now proceed, in the third place, to consider the punishment which the Lord inflicted upon them for this their sin. But first observe his mercy to Moses. He appoints him assistants. He directs him to choose seventy elders, who should have authority given them to execute some of his office, and relieve him of a considerable part of his burden: and the Lord promises to put his spirit upon them also, that they might have wisdom and judgment for the due execution

of their office. The forbearance and mercy of the Lord is greatly manifested in this his condescension in listening to the complaint of Moses; yet it had been better had he asked for more divine grace and strength to enable him to bear and rightly to fulfil whatever God might be pleased to require of him. An apostle was also in pain and distress, and he besought the Lord Jesus for relief, and the mercy shewn to *him* was not a relief from his burden, but a supply of grace proportioned to it: the reply was, “My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Now consider the punishment of the people. It consisted in the granting of their evil desire. The Lord said that he would give them flesh to eat; that he would give it in abundance; that they should not partake of it for one or two days, but for a whole month; and should have it in such quantities, that they should gorge and surfeit themselves with it; and this, “because they had despised the Lord which was among them, and wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of

Egypt?" This is announced to Moses. And what does he? Does he fall down before the Lord, and deprecate this anger and punishment of the Lord? No. He has a fit of unbelief, and enquires how the six hundred thousand footmen could be supplied: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together to suffice them?" He receives an answer sufficient at once to stop all these his vain enquiries, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not." A wind therefore was raised as in the case of the plague of locusts which was brought upon the land of Egypt, and this wind brought with it an astonishing number of quails, some kind of wild fowl which was good for food. By the appointment of him who brought them they fell all round the camp, so that the people gathered them in immense quantities. But now when their wish was gratified to its fullest extent, the indignation of the Lord appeared. "While the flesh was yet between their teeth,

ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah," (that is, the graves of lust,) "because there they buried the people that lusted." It is probable that this plague was produced by their eating even to surfeiting, and even thus it would be as miraculous as if sent without any intervention. Yet neither the history nor the record of it in the seventy-eighth psalm assigns it to this cause. And this we know that the Lord God can execute his wrath in every possible variety of mode, and that whether he chooses to employ instruments and secondary causes, or puts forth his power immediately, all things obey his bidding, and he doeth what he will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth.—But let us learn that we cannot have a greater curse than the gratification of our own desires. Not only will God punish us for our unholy and sinful lustings, but often will he punish us even by the gratification of them. Intemperance of every

kind inevitably brings diseases and death with it. Gluttony and drunkenness, with other sensual indulgencies, have each their own peculiar mode of destroying health, and of bringing their victims to an extreme and wretched state of suffering, or a miserable and premature death. But they have a still worse effect than this. While they destroy the body, they ruin the soul: and are even more to be dreaded for this last sad consequence, than for the former: they bring the body to the grave; and alas, they also cast the soul into hell.

'The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, and through them, to the Christian church in all ages, makes these histories of the Israelites, and this circumstance in particular, of perpetual instruction and warning: "Now these things," he says, "were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted:" and having enumerated other circumstances in their history, he adds again, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition,

upon whom the ends of the world are come." Let us learn then to derive that personal benefit from them, which they are calculated and intended to convey.

Let us beware of slighting the gospel. The doctrine of Christ is the spiritual Manna, the bread which came down from heaven. And when we possess this inestimable gift, this nutriment of divine life, the means of grace which are connected with it, and the hopes of glory to which it leads us, shall we murmur and repine, if we are without those worldly things, on which the carnal mind sets its desires? The punishment of Israel was on this very account, "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation, though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down Manna upon them for to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven." Shall we then fret and quarrel with the Lord's providence, if it withholds things for our lust, though he has given us food for our souls, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ? Alas, too many of you have

no appetite for this heavenly food; you despise those spiritual blessings; the enjoyments of the world are more to your taste than the mercies of the gospel; the pleasures, such as they are, of Egypt, are preferred to the privileges of the church of Christ. Thus, like the Israelites, you despise the gifts of God, the best gifts which he has to bestow. And who knows what the consequence may be? And how dreadful the consequence would be no mind can conceive, if God should say, "They shall eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices."

Are you then poor in this world, with food of the humblest kind, scarcely ever changed, and even that but in scanty measure? Endeavour to be content with your lot. There are yet better things for your seeking. Seek an interest in Christ for the salvation of your soul. Seek his grace and blessing on the poor provision on which you have to live. Do not tempt the Lord, by desiring what might be still worse for you than all your present hard earthly fare, what might prove a spiritual

curse under the semblance of a temporal blessing. Seek to win Christ. This is the one thing needful. Gain this, and you will find hereafter that God ordered the circumstances of your temporal lot in the best manner for your highest good.

Are any of you surrounded with plenty? Take care that you use it not for the purposes of revelling and excess. If you do, you will find that the indulgence of the body will be, as I have said, the ruin of both body and soul. Let great moderation be shewn whatever possessions you enjoy. Be temperate in all things. Use the world without abusing it. Do good with your wealth, and lay up treasures in heaven. Seek to be rich in faith, as well as in houses, or lands, or money; to have an inheritance in heaven as well as a portion on earth.

Are you a professor of Christ's name and gospel? Beware of the spirit of the world. Let not others tempt you by their sinful words or ways. Let not their evil lustings excite yours. Let not their sensual indulgencies or their pomp and pride of life provoke you

to imitate them. Follow not the multitude, the mixed multitude, to do evil. But be stedfast for God, and love not the world. Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and mortify your members which are on the earth.

Finally, let every true servant of Christ be thankful for the provision which is made for him, and above all for his possession of the Lord's grace and mercy. You have meat to eat which the world knows not of. Feed on it in your heart by faith with thanksgiving. Endeavour to have a daily increasing satisfaction in it and relish for it, that by it you may be strengthened with faith in the inner man, and increase unto all godliness.

SERMON XXI.

THE SEVENTY ELDERS.

NUMBERS XI. 25.

And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders ; and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

IN the last sermon we saw that God was pleased to relieve Moses of part of his labour by the appointment of seventy elders as his assistants, and heard his promise that he would put his Spirit upon them. Here we find that promise fulfilled, and the men thereby qualified for the office which they would have to sustain. It is by the Spirit that Christ has ever carried on the concerns

of his church on earth, and this is the subject which I now propose to set before you in the former part of this sermon.

I. In examining the method by which God has been pleased to make himself known unto the world, we find that this has generally been done by his giving the Spirit to certain individuals in such measure and manner, as should qualify them for declaring his truth, foretelling future events, or executing any of the plans and purposes for which he had raised them up. So that whatever there has been of spiritual wisdom, or of true piety, or real holiness, in the world, all this has proceeded from some influence of the Spirit of God. It was by this Spirit that Moses and Aaron were qualified for the offices which they had respectively to sustain. It was this Spirit that was put upon the seventy elders who were now associated with Moses in the labour of guiding and judging the people. It was the same Spirit which spake in all the holy prophets whom God was pleased to send from time to time unto his people: these all “spake as they were moved by the Holy

Ghost." Samuel, David, Isaiah, and all the goodly fellowship of the prophets, were inspired by Him, to deliver those testimonies concerning divine things, which have long ago proved themselves to be the true sayings of God, and which are blessing and benefiting the church even in the present days. A long interval passed from Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, to the time when God was again pleased to pour out this same Spirit on the Christian church on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit was the same, and the object was the same, but the gifts were specially suited to the existing circumstances of the case. The propagation of the gospel was thenceforth to be carried on by the ordinance of preaching. The gift of tongues was therefore bestowed on the disciples, enabling them to make known in all the various countries into which they might come, the great mercy of God in his new dispensation of grace, and the glory of the Son in that mysterious undertaking by which he had redeemed his church through his death upon the cross in human nature and

form. The same Spirit was sent to guide the Apostles into all truth ; and all that they spake and wrote, being under his immediate and direct inspiration, is the truth of God, without any mixture of error. Various other gifts were imparted to different persons in the beginning of that dispensation, but all of them proceeding from the same source, and all directed to the same end, as we read in the 1 Corin. xii. 4, “ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit ; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” And again, Ephes. iv. 11, “ He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

And still through all ages the carrying on of the work of God's grace and mercy is administered by the Holy Spirit. His

miraculous gifts indeed are withdrawn. They are no longer needed as an evidence; the world is in possession of sufficient evidence to convince. But the mind of man is by nature as dark, and his heart is by nature as depraved as ever. These are universally the natural circumstances of man, and these universally need the same enlightening and regenerating influences of the Spirit.—We are expressly told in words immediately preceding some lately quoted that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost,” which means that no man can perceive and truly acknowledge the glory of the person and work of Jesus, except as his mind is enlightened and his heart rightly disposed by the divine influence of God’s Spirit. So when Simon Peter had witnessed that good confession, and had said in the exercise of a true faith, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” our Lord replied to him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Again, the apostle tells us that “the natural man

discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned ;” that is, by the enlightening influence of the Spirit upon his mind.

Moreover, that great change of man’s nature, which is absolutely indispensable to his having any part or portion in God, is uniformly ascribed to the same divine person. The grace of the Spirit counteracts the evil nature of the flesh : “ that which is born of the flesh, is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit ;” “ the flesh lusteth against the Spirit ;” “ if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live ;” “ the works of the flesh are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,” and various other enormities enumerated by the apostle, but “ the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Thus the renewal of man in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, is wholly the work of the Spirit upon his

soul. By this influence he obtains not only new views of divine truth, but also new purposes, desires, and pursuits: not only a new mind, but a new heart and a new spirit.

These are the great purposes for which the Spirit of God is given to man in these days of the gospel dispensation. There are other purposes also, consequent upon these, which the same divine agent is sent to effect; as to witness with the spirits of Christ's servants that they are the children of God, and to be a comforter to them in that much tribulation through which they must enter into his kingdom. And whatever else is necessary for the effectual spread of the gospel, and for the glorifying of Christ in the nations of the earth or in the hearts of individuals, and for the peace and prosperity of the church, all these things "worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." These graces of the Holy Spirit should be the objects of our most intense desire and fervent prayer. The evangelization of the world and the prosperity of our own souls are alike concerned. Nothing is so

much needed as a large effusion of the Spirit. This would produce spiritual knowledge, zeal with all judgment, love and peace, a great accession of converted souls, an abundant increase of the fruits of righteousness. Now we all know that while *every* good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, we know also that all spiritual good is comprised in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that God will “give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” The promise sets before us the duty; it prescribes the method in which we must obtain the boon: “Ask, and ye shall have; seek and ye shall find.” Oh! that the church of Christ was alive, as it should be, to the great necessity which there is for general prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit. All who are aware of this, should supplicate that the Spirit may be given to the church, even as a spirit of prayer. Let him be given as a spirit of prayer, and then he would make such a power of intercession in the church as would speedily bring down all other holy influences. I commend this consideration to your deep regard. I urge it upon you as a

part of your daily prayers. I say, let those who are spiritual pray for a greater measure of God's Spirit, as a spirit of prayer, upon the whole of the church of Christ, while they pray for a plentiful effusion of all grace upon themselves and upon all nations.

II. But now, in the second part of this sermon, I ask your attention to another important subject, with which this history presents us.

Of the seventy elders, whose names Moses had written down, and on whom God had put his Spirit, two came not to the tabernacle with the rest, but remained in the camp : and there they also prophesied, that is, they spake with such light and power on divine things, as made it evident to all the people that they also were inspired. We are not informed why they did not come to the tabernacle : most probably they kept back through modesty and diffidence, thinking themselves unworthy of so great an office : for the Spirit of God never visits a soul with any grace, but he brings along with it a large degree of unfeigned humility ; and in all ages many who have

been, in reality, most qualified for the fulfilment of any part of the ministerial office, have been the most backward to exhibit themselves. But whatever was the cause why these two persons remained among the people, the Lord owned them, and set upon them a seal, whereby he shewed that he had appointed them, as well as the others. When the information came to Moses that Eldad and Medad, for such were their names, were prophesying in the camp, Joshua, at that time a young man, and a constant attendant on Moses, and who afterwards was appointed his successor as the leader of the Israelites, became greatly alarmed for the honour of his master, thinking this irregularity an infringement of due order, and immediately exclaimed, "My Lord Moses, forbid them." The answer of Moses shews that the feeling of his young follower upon this occasion was that of a too zealous partisan. "Enviest thou for my sake," said Moses, "would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." What an instance does Joshua here afford us

of the truth of that scripture which says, that "the spirit which is in us lusteth to envy." We are naturally selfish, and look at our own things. We love not to see others possessed of what we wish should be exclusively our own. We carry this beyond ourselves, to our friends and our party: and here is the unhappy source of almost all the bigotry and dissensions that are found in the world. We often, like this young man, know not what spirit we are of. This feeling of zeal for their master, or I should rather say, of unholy anger at the bigotry and rudeness of a village of the Samaritans, once ran so high among the disciples of our Lord himself, as to provoke them to say, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" The blessed Saviour instantly repressed their unholy desire: he turned, and rebuked them and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

In the verses immediately preceding those

which I have just quoted, there is an instance still more similar to this of Joshua. The Apostle John came to Jesus and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us." And Jesus said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us." St. Mark records that Jesus added another reason also, for "there is no one that casteth out devils in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." What the state and case of this person were is very uncertain, but this we gather, that those who are doing the work of the Lord, who are contending against Satan and the powers of darkness in the name of Christ, and have testimonies of their success and usefulness, are not to be put down or hindered by us, though they may not be acting in all things according unto due order. Notwithstanding some irregularities, some defective or mistaken views, or some enthusiasm in their sentiments or conduct, they are to be suffered to proceed.

There is another still more extraordinary

case in the history of St. Paul, as we find it in Philippians i. 15. He says, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good-will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." One would have thought that the Apostle could have had no satisfaction if the gospel was preached only out of contention, not sincerely, from a bad motive, and in pretence. But the importance of this one point, that the gospel *was* preached, and that thereby many might hear its truths, and by those truths be turned to God, was sufficient to overpower all other feelings, and cause the Apostle to rejoice. The state and character of the individual who so preaches is a very different thing. Bad men may preach sound doctrine. Corrupt motives, such as the desire of fame, the love of money, opposition to others, may induce some to take upon

themselves the ministerial office, and notwithstanding their own unworthiness, God may make them useful to others: as it appears that in the early times of the gospel even miraculous gifts were bestowed upon some who nevertheless had no saving interest in Christ. This should cause great searching of heart in all who undertake to preach, and in any way to testify to others of divine things. They should diligently scrutinize their motives, and see that they be indeed under the influence of the Spirit of God, lest though they have preached in the name of Christ, they should at last be disowned by him as hypocrites and workers of iniquity.

Again, something of the same spirit may be seen in the disciples of John the Baptist, and at the same time a very lovely display of his right feeling under such circumstances. His followers, perceiving the growing popularity of Jesus, were afraid lest it should eclipse that of their master: "Rabbi," say they, "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him."

After referring the bestowment of all gifts and the disposal of all honour entirely to God, and acknowledging the superiority of Jesus to himself, he adds, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He saw his own star setting in the light of the brighter luminary of Jesus. This forerunner of the Son of God, than whom there was none greater among all the prophets, was without any envious disposition, nor sought his own glory : he rejoiced that he to whom he had indeed borne his testimony was receiving the honour that was his due, and gloried in his exaltation though his own depression was a consequence of it.

From all these instances we may well learn to beware of a selfish and party spirit. If the Spirit of the Lord be put upon others as well as ourselves, if good be done in the world by the preaching of those who nevertheless follow not with us, if we ourselves suffer diminution of favour and attendance by the superior gifts and graces of others, let us not be envious and discontented, let us not endeavour to prevent or counteract their usefulness, but let us rejoice that the work of the

Lord is prospering more in their hands than it does in our own. It is uncatholic and unchristian when any cannot bear with patience to see good done except in their own way, and within the walls of their own place of worship, or the sphere of their own communion. In the vast multitude of souls that are every where perishing for lack of knowledge, and living without God in the world, in the myriads who need to be turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, we see cause enough to desire that greater far may be the number of those who preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, but nothing to make us wish to diminish their number, or circumscribe their labours. Rather may we say, in the admirable spirit here exhibited by Moses, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them:" the Lord add unto their number, how many soever they be, an hundred fold, and that our eyes may see it.

Yet surely we may also desire and pray for the prosperity and increase of true and faithful

men within the pale of our own church ; and if some among ourselves have been found who would willingly tolerate none but those who belong to us, there are also not a few of those who differ who have evil will at our Zion, and would rejoice in her downfall. May the Spirit of the Lord descend upon all ; a spirit of knowledge and piety, a spirit of forbearance and candour, a spirit of peace and love, a spirit that shall teach us in honour to prefer one another, a spirit that shall make us all more zealous for the glory of our common Lord, and less envious and hostile to each other.

SERMON XXII.

THE SIN OF AARON AND MIRIAM.

NUMBERS XII. 1, 2.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married ; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses ? Hath he not spoken also by us ? And the Lord heard it ?

WHOEVER is placed in any office of public authority will often feel himself exposed to many trials and mortifications. In our last sermon but one we saw Moses most injuriously treated by the people at large, and now we have to consider other provocations from a nearer quarter. One might have expected that the affectionate attentions, love, and support, which he found among his own

relations, would have been some relief to him in the trials by which his spirit was so much harassed in his public capacity. But here also he was disappointed: and if he had trouble from the mixed multitude, from whom perhaps he could look for little else, he had trouble also from those who were nearest to him, and might be called bone of his own bone, and flesh of his own flesh; for Miriam was the sister, and Aaron the brother, of Moses.

The clamour which these two raised against Moses is said to have been on account of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. This we conclude to have been Zipporah, the daughter of the priest of Midian. It would be unavailing to enquire why they spake against him on her account. Some think that it was because he had married a stranger, and that they conceived that she had too great influence over him; others on the contrary suppose that they took part with her, because Moses had put her away. But whatever the cause of their opposition might be, we see what their spirit was, by the course which it

took, and the complaints which they made. "Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses?" say they, "Hath he not also spoken by us?" They were jealous of his authority, and claimed for themselves a similar exercise of power. We may naturally conclude that they were displeased that the seventy elders had been selected by Moses alone, and especially as Aaron himself was not one of the number.

Now the lust of power is a desire strongly prevalent in our fallen nature. We see that striving to be the greatest was a sin which beset the followers of even the meek and lowly Jesus. Let us however learn, from his example and precepts, to let nothing be done through strife and vain glory, but in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves. Pride and contention, my Christian brethren, are great sins in our fallen nature, to be much prayed against, and by all means to be kept down; on the other hand humility and peace are graces of the Spirit of God, to be earnestly supplicated and diligently cultivated.

The only observation respecting the manner

in which Moses bore this opposition and insult from Aaron and Miriam, is mentioned in the verse which follows the text. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." Some suppose that this verse was not written by Moses, but added by Ezra, or some of the prophets who collected his writings. But there is no need to suppose so. It is the testimony of the Spirit of God, though Moses himself be the writer, to the forbearance and meekness of this servant of the Lord, and refers especially to his temper and conduct upon the present occasion. This might be called his own quarrel: he felt it to be so personal, that he could not enter upon it, or treat it as if it had been directed against God. He who had said to Joshua, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," felt no indignation that Miriam and Aaron should contend for precedency over him, or equality with him, and so far as his own dignity or power was concerned, was willing enough to concede to them what they desired. When Aaron had made the

golden calf, and had thus directly sinned against God, who could have been more zealous than Moses against him? But now he affords a lively instance of patience and long-suffering, and exemplifies that beautiful description of these qualities which is given in the thirty-eighth Psalm, "They that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long; but I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man, that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

But although Moses was, on this occasion, as one that heard not, yet, as we read in the text, the Lord heard it. God always considers what is done unto his servants as done unto himself. It is on this ground that the determinations of the last great day of judgment will proceed, as we read in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, "forasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is upon this ground that obedience to earthly rulers is required, "Whosoever resisteth the

power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." It is upon this ground that the reception and rejection of the gospel when preached by its ministers, is also put, "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Alas, how many hard speeches are thus heard by the Lord! How many execrations of his servants does he know to be truly directed against himself! Oh! that all scoffers, revilers, and persecutors of his people might think of this, and forsake their impiety.

The complainers were instantly summoned, along with Moses, into the presence of the Lord, who came to them in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle. They were made to understand that they were not on an equality with Moses, for that higher honours were given unto him than unto any of the prophets. To the prophets God spake by visions and in dreams, but Moses had been and was still admitted to much greater nearness and intimacy; while he spake to them in dark speeches, he gave to Moses

much clearer discoveries of himself and of his will; and he alone had seen some similitude of God, that was, when he hid him in the cleft of the rock, and when he took him up to him on the top of Mount Sinai. All these were honours far above any that they had enjoyed, and marked the great superiority of this his favoured and appointed servant above them. A further testimony was also borne to the honour of Moses: he was declared by God to be “faithful in all his house;” that is, he had executed with strict fidelity every part of that office with which God had entrusted him, as their deliverer out of Egypt, their leader in the wilderness, their lawgiver from Sinai, their judge in all their quarrels, and their intercessor in all their sins. But let us not read these honourable testimonies to the dignity and character of Moses without remembering what the Holy Ghost saith in after ages of one far more glorious and great than Moses: “Holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to

him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man, but he who built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after: but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Having made these declarations respecting their brother, the Lord asks them, "wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" They might be assured that the Lord would vindicate the authority with which he had himself clothed him. They ought to have feared to entertain such a spirit of insubordination and rebellion against his divine appointments. But alas, what are many sinners not afraid to say and to do against the Lord? Oh! let us think that if it was so great a sin in them to speak against

Moses, how much greater still must it be in any of us to speak against the Son of God, and to refuse to give to him the honour and submission which are his due. And by his own testimony how greatly should we fear to speak against the Holy Ghost, and his divine nature and influences, lest we thereby commit that blasphemy which can never be forgiven either in this world or in the next.

The Lord did not rest in mere expostulation: he shewed his deep resentment and anger. He departed from them: the cloud left the tabernacle. My brethren, this is a proof of God's displeasure which very many would consider but a light matter, while in reality it is one of the very worst judgments which can possibly befall us. God's presence with a nation is its only protection and safeguard. God's presence with a church is the only security of either its usefulness or its stability. God's presence with a soul is the only source of its piety, prayer, faith, or comfort. But because this blessing is not of an earthly, but of a spiritual nature, there are numbers who know nothing of it, and

therefore have no conception of its value, or of the desolation which is made by the removal of it. Whenever he withdraws his Holy Spirit from a nation, a church, or an individual, then will the name of Ichabod properly attach to it, for the glory is departed: then will it hasten to ruin, except on its repentance he return in mercy, and renew the influence of his grace.

But the Lord at his departing left another striking indication of his anger. "Behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow." She was probably the principal offender, and therefore received the more signal punishment. What a consternation must have seized upon Aaron, when he looked upon her and behold she was leprous. It was his office to judge and to pronounce upon the leprosy, and here was no doubt of the case. Her fair beauty was despoiled; she became loathsome to look upon, and stood before him an appalling monument of God's wrath against their offence.

He accepted it as such. Aaron now felt how greatly they had sinned. He was brought

again to his senses, and humbled himself before Moses. "Alas, my Lord," he said, "I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned." Thus it is that those who exalt themselves shall be abased, that those who vilify the servants of God shall often be constrained to seek their help. Many who in their health and pride have despised and reproached a faithful minister of God, have often, in sickness or affliction, been glad to send for him and avail themselves of his prayers and intercessions for them. Observe the sense which Aaron had of the leprosy, "Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed." Such, in a still worse sense, is that foul leprosy of the soul by which it is overspread by sin. Oh! with what fear should we look upon this! with what earnestness should we pray for its removal! With what penitence should we apply to that healing fountain, the blood of the crucified Jesus, in which alone we can wash and be clean!

Moses undertook the work of intercession.

He prayed that she might be healed. Though the punishment was inflicted to sustain his honour and authority, he had none of the littleness and malevolence of mind that could rejoice in her affliction. He might well have reproached her that she had only received her desert ; but on the contrary he pitied and prayed on her behalf. Here he fulfilled that Christian precept afterwards delivered by one who exemplified it to the utmost in his own character, “ Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.” How high and how beautiful is the example set us by that prayer of our dying Lord and Saviour, “ Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

The intercession of Moses was graciously accepted, yet so as that the Lord would shew his resentment of their offences and uphold his just and righteous sovereignty. She was to be excluded from the camp for seven days, and during that time to dwell alone, as having been visited with that loathsome and defiling disease. Thus her offence was proclaimed

by the publicity of her punishment : and she who some time before had borne so honourable a part in the congregation is now disgraced before them all. When she praised the Lord in such an animated strain at the head of the daughters of Israel, she was then indeed their brightest glory ; but now that she has sinned, she is expelled for a stated time from their society, as one that would pollute them by her presence. When we are under the rebuke of our Lord, it becomes us meekly to accept the punishment of our iniquity, and to lie with submission under his chastisement. If we be publicly disgraced before the whole congregation, we must humbly submit to it, and be more abased in our own estimation, than even in that of others.

But while from the punishment of Miriam we learn to “ hear the rod and who has appointed it,” and meekly to receive the chastisement of the Lord ; while we learn from Aaron to confess our sins with all humility, and earnestly pray for mercy ; while we learn from Moses to forgive injuries, and to bear with the provocations of others, let us

not forget the wondrous mercy and pardoning love of Him who is the perfect pattern of every excellence, our holy and most merciful Saviour. Let us remember all our manifold and frequently repeated offences against him, and his as manifold and as frequently repeated forgivenesses of us. With what patience has he borne with our perverseness, pride, and rebellion against him on many occasions ! “ He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” How admirable does he also appear to us in the character of an Intercessor ! Now that he has ascended up on high, and is seated on the right hand of the throne of God, he ever lives to make intercession for us. That is one of the glorious offices which the exalted Mediator now performs in the behalf of his people, nor is there a single character in which we can regard him that does not call for our highest adorations, and our warmest gratitude and love ; and in this place we may especially contemplate his unparalleled meekness and humility, and learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart. “ When

he was reviled, he reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

The subject surely speaks loudly to us all to beware of sin. It will not go unpunished. Even should it be committed by one who had previously been much favoured of God, for Miriam was a prophetess, or by one who on other occasions had been conspicuous in his praises or for his service, as Miriam had been after the passage through the Red Sea; still it will not go unpunished. I know not whether the Lord's people must not even look for more certain and more severe chastisement than others, not only to shew to all his just indignation at their inconsistency and ingratitude, but also that they may be themselves convinced of their fault, and return the sooner to him. They are "chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world." We fancy that we have often observed instances wherein the Lord has dealt most severely with his offending children in temporal judgment, while he has suffered still greater offenders of the world

to escape any such inflictions. The reason is assigned in the scripture, he “ dealeth with them as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not.”

But let not *any* persons think that sin will ever escape altogether with impunity. Sooner or later the judgment of God will fall upon it. And have we not all sin upon us by the natural depravity of our flesh? Have we not all reason to cry out unclean, unclean? Particular acts of sin are but the fruit of this seed which is sown in all human nature; and no one will ever feel the real emotions of true repentance, or heartily apply to that one Saviour, until he becomes truly sensible of his naturally sinful state. This is most strongly stated in the scriptures; this you are led to acknowledge in the confessions of our church. May the Almighty Spirit convince you of it in your soul. He alone can give you to see and to feel this momentous truth: he alone can bring you to that spirit, through which the publican “ smote upon his breast and cried, God be merciful to me a sinner.” This is the first effectual operation

of the Spirit's grace upon the soul: it is necessarily connected with every view which can be taken of divine truth. Except it be seen and felt nothing can be understood of the sacrifice of Christ, nor of the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. This statement of your condition you should deeply consider; you should make it a matter of constant prayer. And I too will pray that the Lord may wholly enlighten your minds, and suitably affect your hearts, on this first step of an entrance into the kingdom of God.

SERMON XXIII.

THE SPIES' REPORT.

NUMBERS XIII. 32, 33.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, the land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

THE children of Israel were going to a land of which God, as we saw in the declaration of Moses to Hobab, had said that he would give it them. When they quitted Egypt they did not go out as their great ancestors

had done, not knowing whither they went. They were proceeding to the country of Canaan, under the conduct of Moses. They were now arrived on the borders of the land. They had nothing to do but to proceed and take possession of it, relying on the promise of God. But a circumstance now occurred which detained them. This was the sending of certain spies to examine the country. It seems by the first verse of this chapter, that this had been done by the direction of God; but when we compare the first chapter of Deuteronomy with it, we find that the proposal had originated with the people themselves, that Moses was pleased with it, and that God had acceded to their wishes, and permitted them again to have their own way, and follow their own inclinations. It appears therefore that it was want of faith, and a too great regard to human means and operations both in Moses and in them, that was the cause of this searching of the land. It would be a good thing if we were narrowly to watch the *spring* of all our own plans. They would

often be given up by our finding that they originate, as this did, in distrust of God, and that they savour too much of leaning on an arm of flesh, or of fearing the face of man.

Twelve men were therefore appointed to go into the land of Canaan for this purpose, each a ruler in one of the tribes. They were to examine the land thoroughly, to learn whether it was fertile, what were its productions, of what kind its inhabitants, whether many or few, strong or weak, and whether they lived in tents or in strong holds, and they were to bring back with them a specimen of the fruit. Accordingly they executed their commission; and after having spent forty days therein, they returned, bringing back with them a large cluster of grapes, which they had cut by the side of a brook, which was ever afterwards named from this circumstance, the brook of Eshcol, that is, of the cluster, and the valley also received the same name. With this to confirm their testimony they gave in their report that the land was very productive, and that it flowed with milk and honey.

But together with this part of their report

they gave a most alarming account of the opposition that might be expected from the people who dwelt in it. They represented them, in the first instance, as being very powerful and warlike, living in large cities defended by strong walls, and many of them, especially the descendants of Anak, men of immense stature, and proportionate powers of body.

Such was the report given by the spies, and given by ten of them in such terms as to manifest their own fears, and dishearten the people. But among them there were two who were not discouraged. These were Caleb and Joshua, the former of whom endeavoured to still the people, for they were full of confusion and riot, and manfully exhorted them, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." He knew on whose arm they might depend, and that neither natural strength of body nor artificial defences could for a moment withstand the might of God. But the others prevailed. They again repeated their own unbelieving and faint-hearted suggestions. They told

the people that the land was one that "ate up its inhabitants." How they thought that to be consistent with the other part of their report, is not very easy to see ; for they also told them that when they saw the Anakims, they were in their own sight as no better than grasshoppers, and that they appeared in the same light to them.

The effect upon the people was most discouraging. We find in the following chapter that they lifted up their voice and cried, and the people wept that night. And they murmured against Moses and Aaron, passionately wished that they had died in Egypt or in the wilderness, thought that it would be better to return to Egypt, and actually proposed to choose for themselves a leader, who might conduct them back again. We cannot help feeling constantly surprised at the folly and forgetfulness of this people. Who could suppose that such fears could be suggested, or take possession of their minds ? Was it possible that the miracles, which God had wrought for them in such numbers and might, could have so soon been erased from

their memory? Surely they might have recollected what Moses had before said to them, when they had such just cause for fear by the pursuit of the Egyptians, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Surely they might have remembered that their eyes had seen Pharaoh with his chariots and horsemen and host overwhelmed in the sea. But alas, the faith even of the best is often weak, and the most unfounded fears are frequently excited, and unreasonable complaints uttered, in every season of difficulty and adversity.

Moses and Aaron fell down on their faces deprecating the divine vengeance. Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes, and endeavoured with all their power to turn their mind. "The land," said they, "which we passed through to search it, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us, a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from

them, and the Lord is with us ; fear them not." There could not be a more courageous or spirit-stirring address. But it was all speaking to the wind, nay worse, it was speaking as it were to wild beasts : " All the congregation bade stone them with stones." But a stop was put to their madness. The glory of the Lord appeared among them. He enquired how long they would provoke him. He threatened to smite them with the pestilence, and wholly to disinherit them, and to make of Moses a greater nation than they. Alarmed at what he heard, Moses earnestly supplicated for them. He pleaded the reproaches that would be cast upon God by the heathen, as if he had killed them because he was not able to give them possession of the land which he had promised them. He pleaded the proclamation which God had made to him of his own name. He prayed that God would pardon them, as he had often before done. And he prevailed for at least a mitigation of the sentence. But the Lord determined to glorify himself. And if he would glorify himself

by shewing to both the Egyptians and the Canaanites that he was well able to effect all his purposes, he would glorify himself also by his severe punishments on these his people for their distrust and rebellion. As they had wished to return to Egypt, they should at least return *towards* it, and should wander forty years in the wilderness. As they wished to die in the wilderness, there they *should* die, and not one man amongst them, except Caleb and Joshua, should live to enter into the land. But their little ones, which they said should be a prey, *they* should be the persons to take possession of the land, and they should have it as a prey. Besides this threatened punishment, immediate judgment was inflicted upon those who had brought up an evil report upon the land. Every one of those who had searched the land, except Caleb and Joshua, died instantly by a plague before the Lord.

Such is the account of another rebellion of this wayward and stiff-necked people: and such again is the exhibition of the Lord's indignation against them for their sin. All

these things should be warnings to ourselves ; they should fulfil the part of beacons to shew us the rocks on which the Israelites made shipwreck of their faith and obedience, and of trumpets to sound an alarm in our ears, that we fall not after the same example of unbelief. This is the conclusion which an inspired Apostle draws from this punishment of the Israelites. “ With whom was he grieved forty years ? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness ? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not ? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Now he argues on, that there is still a rest that remaineth for the people of God, of which the rest of the sabbath, and the rest in Canaan were types and shadows, that is, the rest of the believing soul here in the mercy and love of Christ, perfected by its eternal rest in his presence and glory hereafter in heaven. And he therefore most earnestly exhorts us, “ Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest,

any of us should seem to come short of it ;” “ let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” We see that *they* did not give credit to the word which God had spoken to their progenitors the patriarchs, and to themselves by Moses, that he would give them that land. The great subject of revelation which *we* are required to credit, is the record which God hath given us of his Son, and “ this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that life is in his Son, he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” It is by believing on him that we obtain an entrance into our spiritual and heavenly rest. May the Spirit enable us to believe with all our heart on the Son of God, so that believing we may have life through his name.

But much instruction of another nature may also be derived from this passage of the history of the Israelites which we have been considering. The same kind of false representation is given of true religion as that which we meet with here. The cry that it is

a land which eateth up the inhabitants has not ceased. Who has not fancied, who has not often heard it stated, that religion destroys both the health and happiness of those who follow it, that melancholy is in its ways, that it eats up the spirits, and depresses the heart, and poisons the enjoyments of life. Is not this a representation which is very generally made, and the conception which is most commonly formed in the mind respecting it? I appeal to all you young people, whether this be not the view in which you have been accustomed to regard it. Have you not contemplated religion as that which interferes so much with worldly pleasures, as to deter you from embracing it? Has it not been so represented to you by others, by those who are themselves lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? They are like the wicked spies who brought up an evil report upon the land which they went to examine, and you are like the foolish Israelites who believed their false testimony.

Let us enquire again, are not the difficulties which appear to be in the way of a

religious life exceedingly magnified in the imagination of numbers? The opposition of the world, the ridicule of friends, the strictness of Christ's law, the impossibility of living up to it, with a variety of other hindrances, are like the men of tall stature, and bodily might, who terrified the children of Israel. These are the sons of Anak, with whom many are afraid to contend. Like the coward described in the book of Proverbs who was ever crying out, there is a lion in the way, many persons are continually seeing difficulties and opposition which deter them from entering on the paths and duties of religion.

But be assured that this evil report is a most false one. The land is an exceedingly good land. It is a land that floweth with milk and honey; that is to say, the blessings of peace, content, and happiness abound in it. There is the forgiveness of sins, there is justification by faith, there is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, there is hope that maketh not ashamed, there is joy in the Holy Ghost, there is the love of God shed abroad upon the heart. Yes, there is rest,

true rest for the spirit that is wearied with the toil of this world, or burdened with the weight of sin. One of the wisest and most experienced of men has testified that religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. To this the experience agrees of all who have entered into them, and have had time to try them. They have found that the world is indeed a wilderness, wherein there is little of good, and much of vanity and vexation of spirit, in comparison of that which is emphatically called Immanuel's land. They have found that there are in *it* joys with which a stranger intermeddles not, and peace which the world cannot give. They have found that in keeping God's commandments there is a very present, and an exceeding rich reward, that great peace have they who love his law, and that thus godliness has the promise both of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.

Neither let the difficulties of gaining a part in the kingdom of God be discouraging to any of you. They are all surmountable. It may not be in your own power to overcome

them: nay, we may even say that it is not. But there is help for you. There is grace sufficient; there is strength which is made perfect in weakness; there is the Spirit of God, who is ready to give his effectual aid to you, when you rely upon it. If the Lord delight in you, he will bring you into his rest, and this he will do, if you believe him: only rebel not against the Lord, neither fear your difficulties. The Israelites would not have been able to overcome the Canaanites by their own power. But Caleb said, "Their defence is departed from them and the Lord is with us, fear them not." Moses also said, "The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes. Yet in this thing," he adds, "ye did not believe the Lord your God." You see how they failed; through unbelief. Beware of this rock. Believe in the almighty power and in the infinite mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Through his help you may overcome every enemy, however great and powerful, even all

the hosts of hell itself, though they be angels, and principalities, and powers. Only believe in the Lord, and so shall you prosper.

Thus we maintain that religion is practicable, for sufficient aid is ready to be afforded to all who faithfully seek it. Thus we maintain that religion is also the happiest way of life. Religion is therefore in all respects the good part; and wise and happy are they who choose it as their portion. I pray you all to make it yours. I promise you not exemption from trials and conflicts. By no means. I should give you a wrong estimate of what is before you if I did; the Israelites had to fight their way into the land of Canaan. But I promise you an entrance into the kingdom of grace, if you will strive to enter in with a steadfast faith on the Lord Jesus; I promise you therein far more real peace and happiness than you can possibly have in the world; I promise you a final victory over every obstacle which the world can oppose to you, and over every enemy that can rise up against you; I promise you an inheritance incorruptible and unchangeable, with a crown of glory that fadeth

not away; I promise you these things according to the promises of my God and Saviour, who will never be unfaithful to the word which he has spoken.

Now are there any of you who prefer to remain in the world? Wherefore would you live and wander in the wilderness all your days, and die at last without any portion in God and his kingdom? This generation of the Israelites all perished there, except two. They are presented to you as a warning. Oh! that you may be cautioned by their folly, or by any thing that has been said to you respecting it. The Lord in mercy visit your hearts with his grace that you may set your faces Zionwards, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

What if some should be here who by their words or deeds endeavour to deter any from the holy and good ways of God? The sin of such is dreadfully great. They are not only ruining their own souls, but as far as is in them destroying the souls of others also. Repent and seek mercy from Christ if peradventure this your sin may be forgiven you.

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I intreat the followers of the Lord to aim continually to bring a good report upon his truth and service. Honour the Lord and his gospel by speaking in their praise. Say that he is good and that good are all his ways. Try to win others to seek the Lord with you. Encourage all who seem to be enquiring after him, and strengthen the hands, and confirm the hearts, of your weaker and more timid brethren in the way to Zion. Be careful not to throw a stumbling block in the way of any. . Going onward yourselves, and pressing to the mark, “ comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak,” and “ say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.” So will you act as Caleb and Joshua, and so like them will you be honoured of God.

SERMON XXIV.

CALEB.

NUMBERS XIV. 24.

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went ; and his seed shall possess it.

THE example of others is of singular use. If it be bad, we are warned by it what evils we should shun ; and if it be good, we are instructed and encouraged by it how to serve and glorify God. In the last exposition we had an example of the former kind. We saw the Israelites disbelieving the promise of God, and the punishment with which they were consequently visited, and we were thereby warned not to sin after the same manner. In the present exposition we shall see the opposite character and conduct of Caleb, and the honour which was put upon

him for his trust in God, and we may learn from him how to fix an entire reliance upon the promises of God, and how to remain firm in our faith and obedience, in all circumstances of trial and danger.

You perceive that the text assigns a reason, arising out of the character of Caleb, why God would distinguish him above all the rest of the people. This character and this distinction shall form the two principal divisions of my sermon.

I. 1. Now the first part of the description of the character of Caleb marks a contrast between the spirit of the world, and the spirit of a man of God. I need not enter into the particular history which caused this contrast to be here drawn ; that appeared in our last sermon. I will therefore speak generally on the difference of the spirit possessed by a man of God from that which is possessed by the people of the world.

The spirit of the people of the world leads them to mind the things of the world. These occupy their attention and regard ; from these they seek their honour and happiness, and

practically constitute them their chief good. The spirit which they have, being a fallen and unrenewed spirit, disposes them to love the world, and the things of the world, while the love of the Father is not in them ; it makes them to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, and to seek the honour which cometh from man in preference to that which cometh from God. It forms no right estimate of the value and importance of the eternal world, or of any divine things. It is not willing to subject itself to any privations, or to encounter any difficulties in the fulfilment of the duty which is owed to God. It is earthly and sensual, unimpressed by any religious motive, impatient of restraint, discontented under sufferings, unwilling to receive the yoke of Christ, disbelieving his promises, and disobedient to his just and righteous commands.

But the spirit of a man of God is another spirit. His mind is at all times supremely fixed upon divine things. It is a spirit of faith in the promises of God, of reliance upon his word, and obedience to his command.

it is ever seeking its rest and happiness in him, and finds its richest gratification in meditating upon his glorious perfections, contemplating his wondrous and gracious acts in redemption, enjoying a spiritual intercourse with him in seasons of private, social, or public prayer, and in doing his will, and glorifying his name, as opportunity may be afforded. Thus I say, it is a feeling and state of the mind and heart which is supremely devoted to God, ready to suffer or dare any thing in his service, and desirous only of honouring and obeying his word. It is a spirit which loves, trusts, and delights in God, and serves him with gladness and willingness of heart.

Let me here observe to you that this spirit of a man of God is a divine gift. It is given by God; and in consequence of the contrast between it and the spirit of the world, which is the spirit that is natural to fallen man, and born with him, it is scripturally called a new spirit. As such it is promised by God unto his people; “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” So

the Apostle speaks of serving God in newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, and admonishes the Ephesians to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. My brethren, you will not possess this other spirit, so different from that of the world, except it be bestowed upon you by the converting and renewing grace of God, which you must learn to call for by diligent prayer. It is the application of his grace which makes this difference in the spirits of men, grace which must be sought, and which must be cultivated and cherished, grace which is sufficient to give you as devoted and as courageous a spirit as Caleb had, which can qualify you for any duty or service to which *you* may be called, and enable you, as he was enabled, to glorify God in seasons of fear, of difficulty, and danger.

2. I proceed now to consider a second point in which the character of Caleb is represented as having differed from that of the rest of the people ; he followed the Lord fully.

There were many then, and there are

many in all ages, who make a profession of following the Lord, or being his servants, who nevertheless in reality follow nothing but their own will and pleasure. There are also many who render to God a partial obedience, doing some things, or perhaps it may be, many things, but stopping short when severer duties, or a stricter conduct are required, when ease or pleasure are to be renounced, or dangers encountered: and this is often the case with some who at first have been most forward in their profession of service, as our Lord exemplifies by the character of those stony-ground hearers, who with joy receive the word, but have no root in themselves, and endure only for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.

Let me here endeavour briefly to shew you, what is the character of the man who follows the Lord fully. He is one then who has entirely chosen the service of God, and is perfectly convinced that it is his first, nay his whole duty, to do his will. He gives himself to God with all his powers and

faculties, and looks upon his relation to God exactly in the light in which the Apostle placed it, "whose I am, and whom I serve." He is one who aims to obey the Lord wholly, without any reserves or limitations whatever. He would not do some things, but all things. He would not stop short at any one point of Christian obedience, but would proceed through the whole compass of it. He would not allow himself in any one sin, but would avoid every evil way and work. Though any forbidden thing were apparently as necessary for him as a right hand, or dear to him as a right eye, he would renounce and part with it at once for conscience sake. Only let him be instructed what is sinful, and he no longer entertains or allows it, only let him know what is the path of duty, and he no longer hesitates to pursue it.

Again, the man who follows the Lord fully is one who serves him under all circumstances, at all times, and before all persons. There are often situations in which one who is but half a Christian is disposed to keep

back, to conceal his religion, and to withhold a faithful testimony for God. There may be danger or inconvenience in his so doing: he thinks that it is not necessary, or can answer no end. But not so the man who follows the Lord fully. He is always mindful of God, is never ashamed of the gospel, nor afraid of speaking decidedly for God. This was peculiarly the case with Caleb in the history before us. His companions, all except Joshua, were disheartened, and discouraged the people; the people themselves were ready to stone him; but like St. Paul in after times, none of these things moved him; and he remained faithful to God, even at the risk of his life. So he, who follows the Lord fully, perseveres in giving honour to God, whether others are with him or against him, through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, through favours and frowns, through safety and danger. He adheres firmly to God, and relies upon his promise, well knowing whom he has believed. He confesses Christ before men, and bears his testimony for him, even in the midst

of an evil and adulterous generation, and remains steadfast and unmoveable, when all others are giving way, or declining.—I have not time to follow the description out to its full length. You will yourselves be able to add other particulars.

II. I proceed therefore to notice the distinction which God was pleased to put upon this his faithful servant, for his firm and courageous adherence to him. This distinction was that he and Joshua alone, who had acted throughout in the same manner as Caleb, should be permitted to enter into the land of Canaan. All the rest of the people, as I stated in the last sermon, who had then attained to the age of twenty years, should wander in the wilderness, till they were taken off by death: but he should be permitted to enter in, and obtain his portion of it, which his seed should inherit.

The subsequent history informs us that this was accomplished. We read in the fourteenth chapter of Joshua that at the time of the division of the land, after they had entered into it, Caleb came to Joshua, reminding him of

that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." So Joshua gave him that mountain, the mount Hebron, wherein there still dwelt the sons of Anak, whose size had so terrified the other spies, that they thought themselves as grasshoppers, when compared with them, and Caleb drove them out from it, and took possession of it as his own.

So will it be in the world to come with all who have a right spirit, and who follow the Lord fully while they live upon earth. God has promised to give them an entrance into his kingdom, and that there they shall have their inheritance, and that for ever. It is said by the divine Saviour from heaven, "To him that overcometh I will give to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father on his throne." "Be thou faithful unto death," saith he, "and I will give thee a crown of life." His Apostle says, "Be ye therefore stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know

that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." This Caleb found with respect to God's promise of a portion in the earthly Canaan; this you shall find, if you be of another spirit, and follow the Lord fully, with respect to his promise of a portion in heaven. The Lord's promises to the Israelites were chiefly promises of earthly and temporal blessings; his promises to Christians are of spiritual and eternal blessings. And not one of them will fail. It may be long before they are fulfilled, but in due time God will make good his word to all his servants. We may well suppose that Caleb, while wandering those forty years in the wilderness, and seeing his companions, many of them younger than himself, dying round him, might often have felt an unbelieving fear, that he should surely one day perish in like manner. So an ungodly world is prone to say, "Where is the promise of his coming, for all things continue as they were since the foundation of the world." So the believer may often be tempted to think, while suffering the trials of this

present life, that he is not favoured more than others. But let him not listen to this suggestion of the evil heart of unbelief. As Caleb was distinguished above all the men of that generation, so shall the true and faithful follower of Christ be distinguished above all the world of the unbelieving and ungodly. He shall live through faith ; they shall perish in unbelief : he shall have a crown of glory that faideth not away ; they shall rise up to shame and everlasting contempt : he shall live in heaven ; they shall lie down in hell : he shall dwell with God ; they shall be with devils and damned spirits eternally. Such will be the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Let me here then recommend to you the character of Caleb, and exhort you to follow the Lord fully, as he did. Let your religion be of a decided cast. Settle it in your hearts that God deserves all the trust that you can possibly place in him, and all the service that you can possibly render him. Establish it as a settled principle that his authority is

infinitely higher than every other consideration, that his promises are infinitely superior to every other inducement, and that to honour him by a faithful and entire obedience in all things is the best and highest distinction to which you can possibly aspire. Let me add, that as a decided religion is the most honourable to your character, so it is also the most satisfactory, and keeps the mind in most peace. He that is continually halting between two opinions, is never satisfied with himself. He that seems ready to follow the Lord to-day, and to return back to the world to-morrow, never has a mind at peace; he has no assurance of his state, no answer of a good conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity he is serving the Lord. But he who follows the Lord fully has a stability in his mind as well as in his character. He is uniform in his aim and purpose, and therefore uniformly looks to the end with confidence and joy. He honours God by his fidelity, and doubts not but that God will be faithful to every word which he has spoken respecting his servants.

I would hold up this example of Caleb to those who are but half resolved for God, and I would entreat them to observe the vigour of mind, the firmness and decision which he manifested in the Lord's service, and the honourable distinction which he thereby obtained. Pray that you may have another spirit than that which you at present possess, and that you may become wholly the Lord's servants. I dare appeal to yourselves that you have neither comfort at present, nor sufficient hope for the future, in the state of mind and way of life in which you now are. I exhort you to break out of those trammels in which you are held, and to quit that imperfect kind of service which you render, and to follow the Lord fully. Separate yourselves wholly from the world. Be it known by you that you cannot belong half to the world and half to Christ. Remember how the Lord's anger was kindled on this occasion, and how he swore that none of these Israelites should see the land promised to their fathers, and for this declared reason, because they had not wholly followed him, as we see in the

thirty-second chapter. Remember that it is not sufficient to be almost a Christian. You must be a Christian altogether. With purpose of heart therefore give yourselves up to the Lord as faithful servants to obey him wholly, and without reserve.

But there are some who follow not the Lord at all, but follow the multitude to do evil. Oh ! consider the end of your way. It is ruin, destruction, and death ; death not only of the body, but of the soul. If you live with the world, you must perish with the world ; you must die in your sins ; you must have no heaven, no rest, no future happiness and glory ; you must die under the wrath of God, and be cōsigned for ever to unutterable wretchedness and despair. The carcases of those who died in the wilderness are but a faint representation of those souls which shall lie for ever in hell ; and such must be the final condition of those who will not be the servants of God. Oh ! let me warn you to flee from the wrath to come. Acknowledge the duty which you owe to God. Seek pardon with him, through his Son, for

all your past neglect and disobedience. Repent and be converted to God. Pray for his converting grace, that you may become new creatures. Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are made alive from the dead, and henceforward follow him fully. So you will have a portion with Caleb and Joshua and all the saints of the most high, and reign with them in the land of promise for ever. Otherwise you will die in your sins, and never see the kingdom of God. Continuing in the world, you will perish with the world; for the world is appointed to destruction. Remaining of the same spirit with the men of the world, with them must your present and final portion be. May the Lord in mercy bring you to a better mind, and give you a full determination of soul for himself and his service.

SERMON XXV.

THE ISRAELITES DEFEATED.

NUMBERS XIV. 41.

And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper.

MAN is naturally a self-sufficient and self-willed being; what he wishes to do, he *will* do; what is right in his own eyes, he will have to *be* right, and even the authority of God, and much more the authority of man, is not sufficient to secure his obedience, when he chooses to think that any thing ought to be otherwise: he will judge for himself, and act for himself, however he may thereby transgress the law, whether human or divine, questioning the justice or wisdom of the law, and presuming to think that he knows better what ought to be enjoined, than the wisest of

lawgivers or even the omniscient God himself.

We have a striking instance of this perverseness and obstinacy of the human mind in the history which now comes before us. We have seen that the Israelites had distrusted the promise and disobeyed the command of God, by not going forward to take possession of the land of Canaan. They had exercised their own judgment upon the case, and because the inhabitants were powerful in body, and their cities strongly defended, they concluded that they could not possibly succeed in the attempt, passionately wished that they had died in the wilderness, and proposed to return again into Egypt. For this God had ordered them to return ; and had declared that, except his two faithful servants, Caleb and Joshua, they should all die in the wilderness ; and the Lord had further shewn his indignation by executing immediate judgment upon the other ten persons who had gone to search the land. Hereupon they were in great tribulation ; they made a loud

mourning and lamentation. Like Esau, they lifted up their voice and wept, but with as little of true repentance and humiliation in their hearts, as he had. They changed their minds entirely ; they would now do what God required, and he should reverse his sentence against them. They would not delay a moment, they would go up immediately to attack the Canaanites. We read, that “ The people mourned greatly, and they rose up early in the morning and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised ; for we have sinned.” Now their determination had been a good one, if indeed they had deeply felt their sin, and shewn a submissive spirit, and prayed that the Lord would permit them to go up, and be with them in their expedition. But there was no such spirit of submission, and prayer, and waiting upon God. They were in haste to settle the matter in their own way, thinking that they had nothing to do but to act as they ought to have done at the first, and all would be well. But God would

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not be thus dealt with. Moses told them that they were again transgressing the commandment of the Lord ; he had commanded them to return, and they had nothing to do but to submit ; they must not refuse what was laid upon them, and thus again oppose the will of God. Besides he told them plainly that it would not prosper ; no success could be hoped for, if they made the attempt ; God was not now among them ; the Amalekites had already taken an advantageous post on the hill ; and defeat and slaughter most certainly awaited them, if they should go against them ; and he gave them the plain reason why such would be the issue of their attempt, “ Because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you.” Now if they had been truly humbled, and really disposed to be obedient, they would have submitted to their punishment ; they would have returned to the wilderness ; they would have sought a removal of the sentence, or a shortening of the time of their wandering, by sincere repentance and fervent prayer, and implicit obedience to all

things enjoined them ; they would have said, “ Good is the word which the Lord hath spoken ;” we have sinned ; we will go and bear the just punishment of our sin. But this was not their temper. They would proceed in their own way : they presumed to go to the hill-top, even though Moses refused to accompany them, or to allow the ark to be carried with them, and the consequence was, as might be expected, they were driven back with immense slaughter. “ The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them even unto Hormah.” The whole circumstance is emphatically repeated by Moses, forty years afterwards, when the period of their punishment was fulfilled, and they were really about to take possession of the land, in the first chapter of the book of Deuteronomy ; “ I spake unto you, and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill : and the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as

bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you."

This history abounds in instruction of a spiritual nature. May the Spirit of God, under whose direction it was written, enable us to apply it to ourselves, and to deduce from it those various warnings which it so impressively proclaims.

1. We learn, first, the duty of submitting meekly to the punishment with which God may at any time visit us for our offences against him. It is most true that we may lawfully seek a remission of punishment; and penitence and prayer have often caused a threatened judgment to be revoked. But then such revocation must be sought *by* penitence and prayer; and penitence in fact implies this very submission to any present affliction, which I am now endeavouring to inculcate. It is most true also that many afflictions befall us, as punishments for our sins: and it behoves us, in all our sufferings,

to enquire why we are thus afflicted : and when our consciences convince us of duty neglected, or sin committed, which have justly brought down the righteous punishment of God upon us, then it behoves us to humble ourselves before him, to accept the punishment of our iniquity, to lie meekly under his hand without murmuring and complaining, by no means to attempt to throw it off in any unwarranted way, but to bear it as our just desert so long as God may think proper to continue it, and wholly to renounce that offence, or faithfully to supply that defect, which we are conscious has been the occasion of it. I have ever considered a meek submission to God's chastisements, with a constant acknowledgment of his justice in them, as a principal part of Christian duty : and the expostulation in the book of Lamentations should be strongly impressed upon our minds in all such seasons, " Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?"—But let it be also remembered that punishment for sin is sent, not merely as a punishment for the past, but

to correct and amend for the future: it is sent in mercy as well as in judgment; it is “to humble thee and prove thee, and do thee good at the latter end.” In the recapitulation of the history of the Israelites, in the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses assigns this object as the end of their being thus condemned to this long sojourn in the wilderness, “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.” “Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.” Now if serious reflection upon this striking exhibition of the Lord’s anger against them, led any of the men of that generation to become truly sensible of their sins, more devout in their minds, and obedient in their lives, their punishment was turned to a good account; and though they did not see that earthly Canaan with their bodily eyes, yet were they not excluded from

the heavenly rest, and the happy vision of God and his glory. And so, if our temporal distresses bring us into a meek and humble frame, if they make us more sensible of our sin and our need of mercy, if they lead us to Christ who is the propitiation of our sins and our peace with God, and if they produce in us a faithful and uniform obedience to him according to the gospel, then we too may cry out, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." If temporal chastisements are means which prevent the punishment of eternal fire, then truly we may bless the hand that sent them, as many and many a sufferer has had cause to do.

2. In the second place let us see the folly and danger of acting contrary to the will of the Lord. The history shews us that the Israelites doubly rebelled against him on this occasion. First, in not going forward to take possession of the land, which he had promised them; and secondly, in attempting to do it, when he had commanded them to return again into the wilderness. This shews that the Lord will be obeyed to the letter of his

orders. The Israelites might have said, in the second instance, that *then* they were going to do as God had commanded, that *then* at least they were following his will and were in the way of their duty. But it was not so. That which before was their duty, was now their sin; that which before was commanded, was now forbidden. We are not to prescribe to God, but he is to prescribe to us. When he bids us go, we are to go; when he bids us wait, we are to wait; we are to do what he commands; we are not to do what he forbids. There is another instance in scripture history which presses the same truth upon us; that is the history of Saul and the Amalekites. He was commanded to go and destroy them *utterly*. He went and captured one of their cities of which Agag was king; but instead of destroying all, he spared Agag, and all the best of the spoil. When taxed by Samuel with disobedience, he argued that he *had* obeyed the commandment of the Lord, and that the things spared had been spared by the people only out of a pious motive, and for a religious purpose, even to make a great

sacrifice therewith unto the Lord in Gilgal. The answer which he received deserves to be deeply considered by all who presume to act on their own judgment of what is for the glory of God, and what is acceptable to him, when they have his word to direct them ; “ Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” In both these instances there was the same plea, that God was obeyed ; but in both there was the same disobedience to his prescribed will and order. But we may well observe here, what displeasure must they incur who transgress the commandments of the Lord in matters which cannot be right under *any* circumstances ! who do things that so far from being *ever* commanded, are universally and perpetually forbidden ! These *must* be signally punished. These *must* be excluded from the heavenly inheritance. These must not only pass the time of their present delinquency here under the wrath of God, but must be eternally banished from the presence

of the Lord and the glory of his power, and driven away into the waste howling wilderness of the devils and damned spirits for ever.

3. In the third place we learn from this history the impossibility of succeeding in any attempt without the blessing of God. There is a practical Atheism in the world which dethrones God of his power, and places his government in other hands. Men calculate upon second causes, they look at earthly means and human instruments, upon these they place their dependance, and go forth in the strength of them to their undertakings, without taking God at all into the account, without enquiring if the thing be such as he approves, and without praying for his blessing and presence to prosper it. This is reproved by St. James in these words, “ Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life ? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord

will, we shall live, and do this or that." Again, when men have succeeded in any of their attempts, for the Lord often gives power to get wealth, to prosper in the world, to obtain honours and distinctions, and other earthly advantages, even to those who neither acknowledge nor know from whom these gifts proceed, then again appears a practical disregard of all reference to the providence of God, and the vain and self-sufficient feeling seems to express itself thus, "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." Now the really religious mind has a constant eye to God's providence, permission, and blessing in all things. It is ever dependant upon him for success in whatever it may plan or undertake: it is ever thankful to him for whatever it is permitted to accomplish, and it acquiesces in his will in every instance in which it fails. He who thus recognizes the superintending providence of God in all his ways, will find himself directed in a safe and right path, and will at length be brought in peace to the happy end of all his desires and labours.—But I may especially observe, with

more particular reference to this history, that it is utterly impossible that we can succeed in our spiritual conflict with the enemies of our salvation, except the Lord go with us to it. In this, above all other cases, let us feel, that we must prevail, not by might nor by power of our own, but by the Spirit of the Lord; in every successful issue of the continual contest let us say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory." In this especially we must learn that without him we can do nothing. And yet let us always connect with that humbling sense of our own insufficiency a full assurance that in the Lord we have strength, that his grace is sufficient for us, and that when he is with us, he will make all the powers of the world, of sin, and hell, to flee before us.

4. Lastly, let us learn the danger of neglecting our present opportunities. Had the children of Israel gone up at once to the conquest of Canaan, they had achieved it: when they attempted it afterwards they were too late: God was provoked by their former distrust and disobedience; he therefore left

them to adventure by themselves, and they were greatly discomfited. How apposite is our Lord's intimation that when once the master of the house hath risen up, and hath shut the door, it is in vain to seek admittance ! How useful are the admonitions, " Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near : " " To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts. " Alas, how many have there been who have neglected their day of grace ! There have been times with them when, like Israel on the borders of Canaan, they have seemed to be not far from the kingdom of God ; times in which all things appeared ready for them to enter into it. But they were then unwilling ; their hearts were not decided for God ; they were not prompt to avail themselves of the grace afforded ; and therefore they have been sent back ; they have plunged again into the world, have wandered therein the remainder of their lives, and lost their souls eternally. This, my brethren, is, I doubt not, a very common case. Far more than these many thousands of Israel have, since their day, miserably

perished through their fatal neglect of opportunities, which if laid hold of at the time, might have issued in their salvation. Thousands upon thousands have regretted on their deathbeds the days in which they neglected the mercies of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. They have died in grief and terror, and have left to their surviving relatives an awful uncertainty, to say the very best that can be said, of the eternal condition of their souls. Hear then the wise man's instruction, "Whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Let neither sloth, nor cowardice, nor unbelief, nor love of sin and the world, nor *any* principle that can find a place in a careless, carnal mind, withdraw the purpose of your soul from an immediate obedience to God according to the gospel. You know not how little time you may have wherein to make your choice; and perhaps if the present moment be lost, it may never more be retrievable. Let this be the accepted time, and this the day of salvation; and let every purpose and every energy of your soul be put forth to win Christ, and

to gain possession of the kingdom of God through his sacrifice and righteousness.

My beloved brethren, let me again most earnestly exhort you all to shew a deep submission to the Lord's will in all your afflictions; to lie as penitents before him and make fervent prayers for mercy whenever you have offended; and to give an implicit and immediate obedience to all that he commands you. Otherwise you can never prosper. Whatever plans you adopt, or determinations you form, they will be scattered in the dust, if they be contrary to God, nay, even if they have not his blessing. Believe in and obey the Lord, so shall ye be established in faith and holiness, in peace and hope and joy; believe in and obey his word, so shall ye prosper in every stage of your journey to the rest of heaven. Your enemies shall all be discomfited before you, and you shall take full possession of every part of God's promised kingdom.

SERMON XXVI.

KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

NUMBERS XVI. 32.

And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

THIS chapter gives us an account of a most daring rebellion of some of the Israelites, and of a most terrible judgment inflicted upon them. We have seen such things before, but we have seen none like this as yet among the Israelites. The overthrow of the old world by the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven, and the ruin of Pharaoh and his host by the waters of the Red Sea, have shewn us how God commands the elements to execute his vengeance upon the ungodly; but now we

see the same things among those who are outwardly his own people; and never let it be thought for a moment that any external privileges are sufficient to exempt a sinner from the judgments of God, or that he will not visit with the rod the transgressions of even those who are spiritually his people.

The rank of the persons who were the chief actors and ring-leaders in this rebellion gives it a peculiar character. The first and apparently the principal one was Korah, a Levite, and near relation of Moses and Aaron. Joined with him were Dathan and Abiram, of the descendants of Reuben, the first-born of the sons of Abraham. It appears that Korah was discontented with his situation as a common Levite, and aspired to a participation in the office of the priesthood. Dathan and Abiram were in like manner dissatisfied with the authority of Moses as their ruler, so that this was a regular conspiracy against that system of religion and government which God had been pleased to constitute among them. It was a very powerful and extensive one, as

they were supported in it by no fewer than two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. Their complaint, as it is here expressed, shews very plainly what was their object. "They gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them : wherefore then lift ye up yourselves against the congregation of the Lord." Aaron and his sons were expressly appointed to the priesthood ; none but they were ever to execute it ; it was hereditary in his family. Moses was their appointed chief magistrate : his office was not hereditary, but in his own person and for his own life he held under God the supreme power among them. The possession of these offices was refused them by these rebellious subjects ; they claimed that they should be thrown open, asserting that any and all of the people had as much right to them as Moses and Aaron. This was their sin. It was an attempt to overturn the order

which God himself had appointed, in the government of their church and state. Their complaint was that Moses and Aaron had usurped this authority to themselves. “Ye take too much upon you.” “Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?”

When Moses heard this he fell on his face, doubtless to commit this cause unto the Lord, yet doubtless also with prayer that God would pardon this their iniquity and their sin. Receiving in that application to God a divine communication he tells them what should be done. He bids them all prepare their censers on the morrow and put fire therein, as if to offer sacrifice, as priests, unto the Lord; Aaron also should do the same; and the Lord, he tells them, would shew whom he would have to be his priests, and whom he had appointed to execute that sacred office. Yet he retorts the accusation and tells them that the pride and ambition were with them, and not with him and his brother, “Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.” Then he reminds them of

the privileges which they already enjoyed. He says to them, "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee; and seek ye the priesthood also?" This was the real cause. They were not content with these lower offices, honourable as they were, but they aspired unto the highest also. "For this cause" saith Moses, "both thou and all thy company are gathered together *against* the Lord: and what is Aaron that ye murmur against him?" Aaron was nothing but what the Lord had made him; and therefore their opposition was against the Lord.

Next he applies to Dathan and Abiram. They, it appears, not being of the tribe of Levi, were ambitious of having a share in the civil government: the office which Moses sustained was their object of desire: while the Levites sought the priesthood, they would

be rulers and governors and lawgivers to the people. Moses therefore summoned them also to appear with Korah and his company on the morrow, that an appeal might be made to Jehovah himself, and the matter be decided by him. But they returned a most insolent answer. They said to him, "We will not come up." They accused him of an intention of making himself altogether a prince over them. They charged him with having brought them out of the fruitful land of Egypt, to kill them in the wilderness. They charged him with not having given them possession of such a land as he had promised them; and finally, with having in all these things basely deceived the people. They asked him contemptuously, as if he could no longer impose upon them, "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men; We will not come up." Alas, alas; it was a discontented, proud and rebellious spirit, that blinded them; they saw things through the medium of their own distorted feelings, were themselves altogether in the fault while they accused him, and perceived not that they were in fact quarrelling

with God, in rejecting the authority of his servants.

Moses was moved with a just indignation. He saw into all their ambition and pride. He appealed to God that he had not injured them in the smallest matter ; and prayed that he would not accept their unauthorized and unhallowed offering, and again directed them to appear before God on the morrow, that he might himself decide the point between them. The morrow came, and their daring impiety still continued. They ventured to bring their censers, and they gathered together the whole congregation, as if to support them in their claim by numbers and violence. And now the glory of the Lord appears, as upon such great occasions in their history we have frequently seen. His voice is directed to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." They fall upon their faces and intercede for the people : they cry, " O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" Therefore God will try

the congregation. He directs Moses to warn them to quit the party and even the neighbourhood of these wicked men. Moses went with all speed on his errand of mercy, and the elders of Israel, men of wisdom and judgment, accompanied him. He expostulated most earnestly and affectionately with the congregation, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." The people took the warning, and departed from them. How often is this warning necessary in popular tumults. For these almost always arise through the instigation of a few ambitious men, who agitate the public mind on some question by which eventually they hope to profit: thus they bring crowds together, who often proceed to acts of violence, and thereby lose or endanger their lives, while the chief projectors and agitators often themselves stand at a distance, and keep aloof from the danger. But here the people acted wisely: they saw the impending danger, and dispersed, leaving these daring rebellious persons to brave the

indignation of the Lord which they had excited. And they did brave it. They came with all their families, and stood in the doors of their tents. And now Moses ventured on a proof of his own commission from God, on which no man, but one who knew that he was at that moment under the divine teaching and inspiration would have dared to risk. The words are exceedingly awful. He says, "Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain to them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." Such was the issue upon which he put the decision of the controversy. It would have been the height of folly, to have made such an appeal to God, even though he was conscious of his own divine appointment, and also of the sin

and rebellion of these people, if he had not at the same time felt within himself that special and extraordinary inspiration from God by which he knew that the event would be as he predicted. By that event he was justified. For behold, "it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said, lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

Was not this a most awful and terrible judgment? Was it not "a strange punishment to these workers of iniquity?" Does it not teach us to fear the mighty power of God,

who can crush us in an instant by any one of those elements which he has formed, whenever he may give the word? The heavens and the earth, the flood and the fire, are all the creatures of his hand, and inanimate as they are, they perform his bidding, as quickly and effectually as that angel, who destroyed Sennacherib's host before him. But if we fear the power of God, let us much more stand in fear of sin; for it is sin only that arrays the power of God against us.

Oh! that this history may prove a warning to sinners of every kind, for there are ten thousand forms and acts of sin, and any one of them is enough to rouse the indignation and call down the judgment of a holy and righteous God. We would endeavour to persuade you by his terrors. And without presuming to say that any new and strange thing shall be done unto you, without saying that the earth shall open her mouth and swallow you up, or that fire shall come forth from heaven, and consume you, for we have no such revelation, we nevertheless do say that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven

against all ungodliness and unrighteousness," for so it is written: we do say that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget God," for so also it is written: these will hereafter be cast into the bottomless pit, which will close its mouth upon them, and they shall there be tormented in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. These are the true sayings of God. These are now his threatened punishments for sinners in general, of whatever kind their sins may be. We warn you of these things, with much fear of heart and grief of spirit. We see your danger, and would gladly lead you to escape it. Oh! be advised before it be too late. Perhaps you may have been led away by others. Separate yourselves, I pray you, from these wicked men. Depart from their society, lest ye be consumed in their sins. You may see that they are exposed to the wrath of God. Picture to your imagination, as if you now saw it with your eyes, that they are sinking into the pit of hell. Fancy that their cries are even now sounding in your ears, and flee from all their

evil doings. Be no longer a partaker in their sins. If you would escape their destruction, quit them altogether. Associate no longer with those who will ruin you along with themselves. Flee to the mercy of God in Christ for the pardon of all that is past. Repent sincerely that you have gone at all in the way of the wicked. Pray that the advances which you have already made in sin may be forgiven you. But take care not to advance a step further. How soon may the yawning gulph be opened for you ! How soon may you drop into the perdition from which there is no recovery ! I would be instant with you, for the time is urgent. I would press upon you with most affectionate entreaty. I pray you to save yourselves from this untoward generation, and to unite yourself, in true faith and obedience, to Christ and his people. With him is pardon, peace, and safety. If you be found with him, you will not be condemned with the world. Moses could do no more than warn and beseech his people. I can do no more than warn and beseech you. Yes, I can do something more, I can *pray* for you ;

I can pray for you, and I do most sincerely, that God may give you his converting grace, that by its divine influence you may, first, become sufficiently alarmed for the danger in which you are, and then, be effectually persuaded to turn to him, renouncing every wicked way.

The subject also requires me to warn you of that particular offence in which these people perished. It was clearly as I have stated an opposition to God's established system of government both in the church and state, arising out of the ambition and discontent of the persons specially mentioned. I am far from saying, that any system of government is now so directly and explicitly of divine appointment as that of the Jewish nation; but I do say that the Christian's duty on these subjects is plainly marked out for him by the writings of the New Testament, and especially in the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

Without referring to any similar passage, this is sufficient to teach the Christian what conduct he should pursue towards those who are placed in authority. It is sufficient to shew him that he should not be a turbulent subject, a reviler and declaimer against them. Feelings and conduct of this kind are unhappily too congenial with our fallen nature, and many self-willed persons have always been found ready to speak evil of all constituted authorities, merely because they are constituted. These are ever ready for violence and tumult; the bitterness of their spirit appears in their language, which is such as often to excite others to deeds of violence and blood. Depart, I pray you, from the tents of such wicked men, lest imbibing their spirit, and excited by their harangues, you become partakers of their evil deeds, and perish with them in their sins. The Christian spirit is pure and peaceable. It is too much occupied with the things of heaven, to embroil itself

in the politics of earth. Such will be ever the spirit of a true Christian, even if he conscientiously dissent from the church establishment, or prefer a different form or administration of civil government.

May God grant unto us quietness and peace. May he appear for us in every extremity, and rebuke the presumption and violence of designing and evil-disposed men. May he pour out a larger portion of his Spirit upon the whole nation, that the ministers of God and the laity, the rich and the poor, masters and servants, the governors and the governed, may all know and practise their respective duties to him and to each other. May piety, true scriptural piety, increase through all our land, and cure all our disorders and evils in every quarter.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

EXPOSITORY SERMONS

ON THE

PENTATEUCH,

BY

THE REV. W. THISTLETHWAITE, M.A.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, BOLTON.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. IV.



SERMON I.

The Plague among the Israelites.

NUMBERS xvi. 41.

But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. 1

SERMON II.

Aaron's Rod Buddeth.

NUMBERS xvii. 8.

And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi, was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. . . . 18

SERMON, III.

The Red Heifer.

NUMBERS xix. 17, 18.

And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel : and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that toucheth a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. 35

SERMON IV.

The Water of Meribah.

NUMBERS xx. 13.

This is the water of Meribah ; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them. 53

SERMON V.

The Brazen Serpent.

NUMBERS xxi. 5, 6.

And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness ? for there is no bread, neither is there any water ; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people ; and much people of Israel died. 70

CONTENTS.

v

SERMON VI.

Balak sends for Balaam.

NUMBERS xxii. 6.

Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people : for they are too mighty for me : peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land : for I wot that he whom thou' blessest is blessed; and he whom thou cursest is cursed. 88

SERMON VII.

Attempts of Balak and Balaam.

NUMBERS xxiii. 7, 8.

And he took up his parable and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? 107

SERMON VIII.

Further Prophecies of Balaam.

NUMBERS xxiv. 5, 6.

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. 126

SERMON IX.

The Zeal of Phinehas.

NUMBERS xxv. 11—13.

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel. 144

SERMON X.

The Jewish Sacrifices.

NUMBERS xxviii. 2.

Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, my offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. 162

SERMON XI.

The Excision of the Canaanites.

NUMBERS xxxiii. 50—53.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak

unto the children of Israel, and say unto them,
When ye are passed over Jordan into the land
of Canaan, then ye shall drive out all the inha-
bitants of the land from before you and destroy
all their pictures, and destroy all their molten
images, and quite pluck down all their high
places : and ye shall dispossess the inhabitants
of the land, and dwell therein ; for I have
given you the land to possess it. . . . 179

SERMON XII.

The Cities of Refuge.

NUMBERS xxxv. 11, 12.

Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of
refuge for you ; that the slayer may flee thither,
which killeth any person at unawares. And
they shall be unto you cities of refuge from the
avenger ; that the man-slayer die not, until he
stand before the congregation in judgment. . . . 197

SERMON XIII.

Moses's Review of the History.

DEUT. i. 31, 32.

And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how
that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man
doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went,
until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing
ye did not believe the Lord your God. . . . 215

SERMON XIV.

Regard to the Word of God.

DEUT. vi. 6—9.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. 234

SERMON XV.

Ungodly Marriages Prohibited.

DEUT. vii. 3, 4.

Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. 252

SERMON XVI.

The Use of Trials.

DEUT. viii. 2.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. 270

SERMON XVII.

The Requirements of God.

DEUT. x. 12, 13.

And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? . . . 287

SERMON XVIII.

The Blessing and the Curse.

DEUT. xi. 26—29.

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse ; a blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command

you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God has brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal. 305

SERMON XIX.

One Place of Worship for the Jews.

DEUT. xii. 5.

Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come. 324

SERMON XX.

The Office of the Levites.

DEUT. xii. 19.

Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth. 341

SERMON XXI.

Charity to the Poor.

DEUT. xv. 7.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother. 358

SERMON XXII.

The Prophet like unto Moses.

DEUT. xviii. 18, 19.

I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. . . . 375

SERMON XXIII.

Prediction of Future Judgments.

DEUT. xxviii. 65.

And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. . . . 394

SERMON XXIV.

God's Favour to his people.

DEUT. xxxii. 9.

The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. . . . 414

SERMON XXV.

The Majesty and Glory of God.

DEUT. xxxiii. 26—29.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency? and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. 432

SERMON XXVI.

The Death of Moses.

DEUT. xxxiv. 4, 5.

And the Lord said unto Moses, this is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. 451

EXPOSITORY SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE PLAGUE AMONG THE ISRAELITES.

NUMBERS XVI. 41.

But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

IN our last exposition, of the former part of this chapter, we witnessed a very sinful rebellion of some of the Levites and others against the authority which God had given to Moses and Aaron, and also the very awful judgment which was executed upon them for their sin. In this close of the chapter we have a most extraordinary exhibition of the folly and depravity of the people. It comes upon us, as we read the simple narrative of

the history, so suddenly, so unexpectedly, so contrary to all that we could conceive of what would be their feelings under such circumstances, that we seem to require time to consider and reflect upon the natural state of the human heart, before we can at all account for it. The circumstances, let us remember, were these. Korah, a Levite, with Dathan and Abiram, of the tribe of Reuben, had brought together a very tumultuous assembly of the people in opposition to Moses and Aaron, with an intent to displace them from the offices of rank and power which they respectively held in the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of the Jewish nation. A display of the Lord's vengeance, signally out of the common course of nature, had cut off the authors and principal abettors of the sedition. The earth had opened, with a vast chasm, immediately under their feet, into which they had fallen, with all that belonged to them, and the earth had immediately again closed over them, while fire from heaven had consumed two hundred and fifty men who were preparing to offer incense. The people

had witnessed this judgment ; horror-struck they had fled at the cry of them ; they had seen that it was the Lord's doing, a miracle wrought directly by himself, to vindicate his own appointment, and to punish those who rebelled against them. We should have expected that they would have been terrified silenced and humbled, and warned by so terrific an example. We might have expected that they would have retired to their tents, submitting to the rulers whom he had appointed over them. But how great is our disappointment and surprise, when we read, " But on the morrow," so soon after, even the very next day, " but on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Can any thing be conceived more perverse and provoking than this ? They say, " Ye have killed," as if this had been the act of Moses and Aaron, whereas it was evidently the immediate act of God himself, as an extraordinary and miraculous judgment upon them for their sin. To account

for such infatuation is indeed impossible on any principles of reason or right feeling: the only reason that can be assigned is to be found in that fallen state of the human understanding and heart, through which men are unable to discern the hand of God in the ordinary operations, or extraordinary changes of nature, and unwilling to submit themselves to his will and word. They say also, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord," as if these atrocious transgressors had been good and holy people, and as if Moses and Aaron had been persecutors of them for their patriotism and piety. Oh! how pride, passion, and self-will blind the understanding of men, so that they will call evil good and good evil, and put darkness for light, and light for darkness. And never does such infatuation so generally appear as among large bodies of men in popular tumults.

Little time however was allowed them to continue their impious complaints. Again the glory of the Lord appeared; "as they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation,

behold the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared." It is afflicting to think that these supernatural manifestations of the Lord's presence should have had no more effect upon them: and it shews how little men would be impressed by miracles, or frequent and immediate judgments, who are not willing to reverence the appointed revelations of the Lord: "if they hear not Moses and the prophets," said our Lord, "neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." The command was then given to Moses and Aaron, "Get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment." Moses again had recourse to intercession. He and Aaron fell upon their faces. But Moses perceived that no time is to be lost. Either from divine revelation, or from some symptoms which appeared among the people, he saw that God had already begun to put his threatening into force. He hastily directed Aaron what to do. "Take a censer," he said, "and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the

congregation and make an atonement for them ; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord ; the plague is begun." Aaron was as full of anxiety for the people as his brother. He instantly did as he was commanded. He ran into the midst of the congregation, fearless of their wrath, fearless of the contagion of the plague ; he put the incense upon the sacred fire in the censer, and made an atonement with it for the people ; and he stood between the dead and the living ; and the plague was stayed.—Notice the spirit of these men of God. Insulted and opposed as they had been, taunted, and charged with the falsest accusations, they have no ill-will, or resentment, they seek no revenge for themselves, nor feel gratification at the punishment of their factious and rebellious people. Nay, on the contrary they are full of the purest character. They not only suffer long, but they are kind. They shew the utmost anxiety and zeal for the welfare and safety of those who had behaved themselves so unjustly and insultingly to them. They count not their own lives dear unto themselves if so be that they

may save the lives of these offenders. Herein they shew a striking instance of the feelings of such men as are really and spiritually the people of the Lord. But notice also the rapidity and the force of the Lord's judgments. In the short space of time during which the plague raged, and which lasted only so long as while Aaron could go into the tabernacle for the fire and incense, and run with them into the midst of the people, no less than fourteen thousand seven hundred were infected and died. Swifter than the lightning's flash, and more destructive than the mountain torrent, flew the pestilence of the Lord, cutting down all before it, and shewing to the rest of the terrified people, and to all succeeding generations; another of those arrows which the Lord has in his quiver for the destruction of the wicked. Three of his sore judgments have here appeared together. The earth swallows up Korah and his company, fire goes forth and consumes the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense; the pestilence destroys fourteen thousand seven hundred more. Yet there

is a far sorer judgment than any of these. It is the last judgment, in which both the body and soul of the impenitent and Christless shall be cast into hell. Oh! let this be the great object of your dread, as you read of these or any other similar displays of the Lord's righteous indignation against the wicked. Learn above all things to flee from the wrath to come. Nothing of terror and horror, nothing of the utmost intensity of wretchedness and pain can possibly compare with that last final and irreversible judgment of God. May he grant us the grace of his holy Spirit, that we may speedily and effectually apply that remedy, which with so much mercy and wisdom is provided for us in the gospel.

Behold in this particular exercise of the office of Aaron a singular representation of the mercy of Christ. He is, you well know, the great high-priest of our profession, and thus it is, that he makes an efficacious atonement for us. We have committed sin against the Lord, and have most justly provoked his indignation, and righteously might he have

entered into judgment with us, and cut us off for our iniquities: but his patience has waited, and his forbearance spares us to this hour. Yet the plague is begun. The poison of sin rankles in our veins: that infection of nature taints all the springs of life; and death, even eternal death, follows in its train. And now the interposition of the Son of God appears. He comes out of his glorious tabernacle on high; he leaves the mansions of heaven, and the glory which he had with the Father before the worlds were; he runs into the midst of the people; he exposes his life to their fury; his life is actually taken from him; by wicked hands he is crucified and slain. Thus *he* makes the atonement. Here is the incense that ascends as a sweet smell. Jesus stands between the dead and the living, and the plague is stayed. And let me repeat this thought again and again, he stays this plague by making the atonement for our sins in his own person and by his own death. He takes the condemnation and the penalty of them upon himself; he takes the curse of them and the death, and he bears them away, as

the scape goat, into a land of forgetfulness. He dies, that we may live. Yet one part of the penalty of sin, we know, must still be executed, even upon those who believe in him. The body must die because of sin: but "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."—Moreover, he ever liveth to make intercession, and is still carrying on that office of his priesthood eternally in heaven. The censer is still in his hand; the incense from it still sends forth its grateful smell. He is doing at this hour in heaven all that is needed by all and every of his faithful servants upon earth, and will continue to do so, until his elect shall be gathered together from all quarters of it. Every office of his unchangeable priesthood will continue to be fulfilled by him, so long as he has a church remaining in the world that needs his care.

Oh that this whole congregation was deeply aware of the awful state in which all are naturally lying through sin. You

may feel its effects in every ache and pain, in every sickness and infirmity of your bodies, which things are so many continual intimations of your mortal state : you may see it also in the manner in which death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned. These things affect even the body itself, and are perceptible to the senses. And if it were not a part of our sad depravation, so that your minds are blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, you would see it as much, and more, in all your alienation of mind from God, in your natural enmity to his law, in the unholy desires which fill your hearts, in the evil tempers which rage in your breasts, and in the transgressions and sins which you commit in thought word and deed. In these things consist that plague with which human nature is infected. It is already begun, and is proceeding, by certain and not slow degrees, to its fatal termination. Eternal death is its necessary consequence ; except, as I have said before, it is arrested in its course by the mercy and grace of the great High Priest of the Christian dispensation.

Oh ! that you were aware of this natural condition of your souls through sin ! Oh ! that you could spiritually see that wrath is gone out from the Lord, and that you are thereby in imminent danger of perishing everlastingly ! Be assured that such are the actual circumstances of your case, and then go by faith and seek that almighty and merciful intercessor, who only can save you from the wrath of God. His is the Saviour's office : he came from heaven to seek and save that which was lost : " This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Moreover, it is his grace which *cures* this plague of sin in the soul, as it is his sacrifice on the cross, which atones for its guilt. The influence of his sanctifying spirit poured into the soul is that balm of gilead, of which the prophet speaks, and by which the health of the soul may be recovered. The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost make us new creatures. Apply then for this his grace that your souls may be converted to God, and that the deadly power

and prevalence of sin may be destroyed within them. It is said that "they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." Conscious of the sickness of your depraved nature, apply to that great spiritual physician for the healing influence of his grace, and so you will receive the health of your souls. Desire conversion as much as pardon : seek deliverance from the power of sin, as much as from the pit of hell : aim at holiness as much as heaven. "Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven : " "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." That man's views and feelings are all utterly wrong, contrary to God, and at variance with his sacred word, who is not lead to love the service of God, as well as to fear the wages of sin. When the heart is truly under the influence of divine grace, it loves holiness piety and religion, even for their own sakes, and would follow them and increase in them, even though there were no hell to punish the wicked, and no heaven to receive the good. I pray you then, you who are not yet healed

of the spiritual malady of sin, that you would earnestly seek the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, to destroy the dominion of sin which naturally reigns within you, and to infuse into your hearts the love of God and of Christ, and of all the holiness and morality inculcated in his gospel.

Let me next beseech those who hope that, through the mercy and grace of Christ, they already partake of his atonement and sanctification, to see in this history of the Israelites, the lamentable blindness and perversity of the human heart; and to gather from it those warnings for themselves which it seems to present. And first, I would say, be distrustful of yourselves. If these Israelites, after all that they had seen, and all that had been done for them, were thus lamentably led away into so great a rebellion against God by their own evil passions, and expose themselves to so great wrath from him, why may it not be so with you also, for what are you by nature better than they? It is well said that "he who trusteth to his own heart is a fool." Therefore "let him that thinketh he standeth,

take heed lest he fall." Be ever watchful and jealous over yourselves with a godly jealousy, and "keep your hearts with all diligence, since out of them are the issues of life." Beware of giving the least way to a fretful rebellious temper against God. When the Israelites fell into this discontented and quarrelsome spirit with his chastisement of them, their powers of observation and reflection became obscured, they could not see his hand in a judgment even so manifestly miraculous, but laid it wholly to the account of men who not only had no power whatever to make the earth cleave asunder, or to bring fire from heaven, but who even would have laid down their own lives for their sakes. Thus we see that sin and rebellion stupify the mind, as well as harden the heart: they destroy men's reason and judgment, and make them act like idiots. Thus we see that when turbulence and passion sway the heart, the faculty of consideration is suspended, and men rush into sin, with unbridled impetuosity, as a war-horse into the battle.

But I add, lastly, that while it is indispensable that you be jealous and watchful over your own hearts, you may with most perfect confidence rely on the power and grace of Christ. By his help you may be enabled to overcome all the temptations to which your evil nature may subject you. He is able to keep you from falling. And he allows his people to appropriate to themselves what he said to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness." Rely therefore with undoubting confidence on the help of Christ. Trust yourself wholly to his care ; and while you carefully distrust, nay utterly despair of, any sufficiency of your own to preserve you from falling into some such sin as this of the Israelites, make no doubt whatever of his ability, and cast yourself wholly on his care. You honour him when you thus trust him ; and this very trust will keep you watchful over yourself, because it arises mainly out of a continual consciousness of your own depravity and helplessness. Surely, may you say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and

strength.” You may look unto him to enable you to persevere, and he will perfect that which concerns your safety. Rely therefore on his protection and go forth in his strength; he will never leave you nor forsake you, but will keep you through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in due time.

SERMON II.

AARON'S ROD BUDDETH.

NUMBERS XVII. 8.

And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

EVERY judgment of God that is executed upon transgressors has a merciful intention towards the survivors, that they may fear, and be prevented from the commission of similar iniquities. The present chapter affords us an instance of this. God is pleased, as it is recorded here, to put the appointment of his priests to another proof, and to work another miracle, that he might make the children of Israel to cease entirely from their murmurings

against Moses and Aaron respecting their offices.

The method adopted was this. The head of every tribe in Israel, and Aaron among the rest, was directed to bring a rod of the almond tree before the Lord, and Moses wrote the name of each of them upon his respective rod. They were then laid up in the tabernacle ; and it was declared that the rod of him, whom the Lord had chosen to be his priest, should blossom, and should thus make manifest to them the Lord's will as to the appointment to this sacred office. Whether these rods were their usual staves of authority, or whether they were cut fresh for the purpose, does not appear, nor is it important : neither the old and dry nor the fresh and green could have produced flowers, except by a miracle. The rods were laid up during the night according to the directions which had been given, and when they were brought out in the morning, " behold, the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi, was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." While the

others remained in the state in which they were laid up, this was found in all the different stages of fruitfulness, buds blossoms and fruit appearing upon it at the same time. Thus the Lord plainly declared which was the man and which the tribe that he had chosen, and we may conclude that this manifestation of his will had the intended effect, as we no more read of any murmurings of the people on this account.

But, in order that their acquiescence in his appointment might be perpetually secured, Moses was directed to place this rod of Aaron in the tabernacle before the altar of testimony, "to be kept for a token against the rebels," that is, to remind the people, through all succeeding generations, of this rebellion begun by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and to deter all others from any imitation of their crime; and thus, saith the Lord, "Thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me that they die not." The censers of those two hundred and fifty men, who were consumed by fire from the Lord, had been before applied to a similar purpose. Aaron had

been directed as we may see in the preceding chapter, to take them out of the burning, and they were made into broad plates for a covering of the altar, “to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he be not as Korah and his company.” Memorials, if not of a similar nature, at least answering a similar purpose, may continually be met with.

In various objects that are presented to our own eyes, we may see testimonies of God's mercies to us; and alas, of our own faults or those of our ancestors also. Many are the persons and places, the sight of which may remind us of our sins; and they will remind us of them to good purpose, if they help to prevent all repetition of our offence. Many troubles, privations, or inconveniencies may be experienced by us, which may also bring past sins and follies to our remembrance: may they tend to keep us humble and watchful, and prove warnings to us and to our children after us. Let me add further, that all these records of the scriptures are

themselves memorials; and well might the saying of St. John be inscribed upon them all, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

And now what a remarkable miracle was this, that a rod cut off from the tree should thus blossom and bear fruit! In nature it is not so; if a branch be cut from the tree, it withers, and dies, and is fit only for the burning; and the divine Jesus uses this natural consequence of excision as a similitude of the case of those who are separated from him: "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." In like manner we may make use of this rod of Aaron to represent spiritual things; and let such be the use to which, in the remainder of this sermon, we endeavour to put it.

I. First then, in this blooming and fruit-bearing rod of Aaron we see a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ himself: and it is neither forced nor fanciful to make such a comparison because the scripture itself adopts a simile of the same nature. In a prophecy

of Isaiah, which unquestionably relates to Christ we read—it is in the first verse of the eleventh chapter,—“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” And in another part of the same prophet we are furnished with ideas of him not unsuitable to the natural state of Aaron's rod; for we read in the fifty-third chapter and the second verse, “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground,” which is explained by the words that follow, “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Now, as that divine Saviour appeared at first, there was no intimation to the human eye that such virtue existed in him, and that such fruit would spring out of him. Even in the very place from which he sprung there was nothing that promised any distinction or usefulness, for the enquiry was contemptuously made, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” The station of life which he occupied was in like manner mean and despised: “Is not

this the carpenter's son?" The life that he led upon earth indicated nothing of greatness and dignity, for he was attended only by a few poor and humble followers, and had not a place where to lay his head. But least of all did his end furnish any apparent ground for expectation of what was to spring from him; for he died as a malefactor, he died by crucifixion, a death inflicted only on the vilest of the vile, and then was that dead body laid up in the grave, as the rod of Aaron was laid up in the tabernacle. And now behold the miracle. On the third day he came forth, blooming with renovated life himself, and bearing life for thousands. Through all this time of trial and suffering, through all these days of apparent weakness and incompetency, still was he the man of God's choice, his elect servant in whom he delighted, his appointed High Priest, Prince, and Saviour. And God thus bore testimony to him: he was declared to be the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. As the rod of Aaron was a visible memorial, for many ages, to the Israelites,

of the divine appointment of Aaron and his sons to the office of the priesthood, and of the sin of their ancestors in rebelling against it, so the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, facts divinely recorded, and established upon the most incontrovertible evidence, are memorials to all mankind of his appointment to the great work of redeeming mercy, to offer a perfect expiation for sin, to raise the bodies of the dead from their graves, to be the judge of quick and dead, and to assign the future and final condition of all that have ever lived: yes, and they are memorials too of that universal sin of the human race, which rendered necessary so great a sacrifice, and which is removed only by that redemption. Of these great events, and of the mercies which believing souls derive from them, memorials are given to us in the sacraments of the Christian church; and in that of the Lord's supper especially we, as it were, evidently see the Lord crucified before us, and shew forth his death until he come.

Let us rejoice in the fruits borne by the Saviour, now that he has been fully owned of

God. These are the spiritual blessings with which he blesses his church, the blessings of pardon, reconciliation, holiness, strength, consolation, and whatever else is treasured up in that fulness, which dwells in him. This branch of the Lord is now indeed "beautiful and glorious," its fruit is of all manner of sustenance and delicacies, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. What mean these figurative expressions of the scriptures which I use but that our divine Saviour contains in himself, and supplies from himself, all conceivable mercies and graces, as any of them may at any time be needed by any of his waiting and believing servants? He is "made unto us of God, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

II. But secondly, the gospel ministry, in its apparent weakness and insufficiency, and also in its actual usefulness and efficacy, is represented to us by this first dry and dead, and afterwards budding and fruitful rod of Aaron. Those to whom the ministry of the gospel was first committed were poor and illiterate men. They had none of the words

of man's wisdom, nor any thing of the power of human force. And the preachers of the gospel in all ages have had their "treasure in earthen vessels," and have uniformly cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But how great has been the influence of the preaching of the gospel in the earth! What extraordinary effects have followed from means apparently in themselves so unable to produce them! What thousands have been convinced and converted! brought out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God! What multitudes have been led as penitent, willing devoted servants to Christ, heartily and wholly renouncing all their former idolatries sins and worldliness, and receiving the humbling self-denying sanctifying doctrines of his gospel. A vine has indeed sprung out of him which has filled the whole earth; nations sit under its shadow with great delight, and its fruit is sweet to their taste.—Lift up your thoughts to heaven, and consider the general assembly and church of the first-born, the spirits of the just made perfect, who are already gathered together in

the presence of God and the enjoyment of his glory. How many thousands and thousands of thousands surround his throne, and what countless accessions are still continually making to them ! These are the fruits of the gospel ministry, the produce of those who proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, of the ambassadors who go forth in his name beseeching men to be reconciled to God. Thus hath he made the rod of the gospel-priesthood to bud, and hath ordained that it should bring forth fruit. And thus he will continue to bless their labours according to his promise, that as they go forth into all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature, he will be with them always, even unto the end of the world.

III. But, thirdly, we seem to have here also a representation of the naturally dry and barren state of the unconverted soul, and of the fruitful change which appears in it, when it is born again of God. If we look at the state of the world as it lies in sin what an absence of all piety holiness and the fruits of righteousness every where appears ! They

are “dead in trespasses and sins.” Now looking at the rods laid up before the Lord, it might well have been asked, What! can any of these dry dead and sapless sticks bud blossom and bear fruit? So looking at the state of unconverted men, so far off from God in all their thoughts and desires, so ignorant of his truths and so disaffected to even what they know, so lost to God in the faculties of their minds and the powers of their bodies, it might well be asked in the language of the prophet Ezekiel, “Can these dry bones live?” Can these unholy sensual depraved beings bring forth fruit to God? But just as the Lord God says in the fifth verse of this chapter, “It shall come to pass, that the man’s rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom,” so it comes to pass, that the objects of his spiritual choice are effectually wrought upon by the influence of his divine grace, and they are washed sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. They are made “willing in the day of his power;” they are endued with spiritual life; they are

quickened from their death in sin unto a life of righteousness ; they no longer live in the flesh obeying it in the lusts thereof, but they “ yield themselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” Let every converted person know that God hath not called him “ to uncleanness, but unto holiness,” and that it is his part to “ shew forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Let every such person also feel that he had no source of fruitfulness in himself, but that from God is his fruit found. All our fresh springs are in him, and he hath wrought all our works in us. By the grace of God we are what we are. Let him moreover feel, that he can continue to be fruitful only as he abides in Christ, for “ without him we can do nothing.”

Now this display of the mercy of God in the appointment of Christ as the High-Priest of his church, and of the gospel ministry as the instrument by which souls are brought into that church, as also these effects produced

in his chosen people, should completely take away all the murmurings of all his creatures. A sufficient provision is now made for the gracious acceptance of every one who comes through this great High-Priest, in this new and living way of God's appointment. The provision is such that we may come with boldness to the throne of grace; and this we should do, and not act as the Israelites who pettishly and perversely cried out, "Behold we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?" They thought that it was a hardship that they might only approach to God through another, and saw more danger to their lives than mercy to their souls in this appointment. But let us see that herein is our safety, herein is the certain acceptance of ourselves and our services. Let us bless God for so gracious an appointment, and let us gladly and joyfully and thankfully accede to the choice which he has made of one who is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

So also may the appointment which he has made of men like ourselves to proclaim the mercy and grace of the gospel to their fellow-sinners, tend to take away all dissatisfaction with his arrangements. They are the most suitable agents for this purpose ; for they can tell to others what God has done for their own souls ; they can comfort “ with the comfort wherewith themselves are comforted of God ;” they can confirm by their own experience all the statements of the word of God. These then “ make known the mystery of the grace of God ;” they publish to all men “ the glad tidings of great joy ;” they “ make all men see what is the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ,” and leave none, but the wilful, ignorant of the way of peace. Though none could have a right to murmur against God under *any* circumstances, yet this dispensation of his takes away all occasion of objection, and leaves the man altogether without excuse, who rejects the testimony which is thus placed before him. Oh ! let not one of you now die and perish, when God has in infinite mercy

provided you such a way of acceptance, and adopted such means to make you acquainted with it, and induce you to receive it.

Finally, I pray of all you Christian professors that the holiness of your characters and lives may silence the cavil of all who would murmur against the exercise of the grace of God in the choice of his servants. Let him be justified in the righteousness of his works before all the world, and do you shew forth such abundance of all those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God," as may fully demonstrate that he hath indeed chosen you that you should be holy. The Saviour himself hath said, "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." Let it be your object to glorify him thus. Hold up the choice which he has made of you to the reverence of all mankind, and render his grace an object of desire to others by an exhibition of the sanctifying influence which it has had upon you. Let such genuine piety, such humble meekness, such sincere religion, such purity of morals, such integrity

in all circumstances, such ready charity, such active benevolence, ever appear in you, as that God's hand and grace may be seen in the buds blossoms and fruits of your productiveness, that so the objections and murmurings of all men against the ways of the gospel may be for ever removed, and God be justified, admired, and venerated by all.

SERMON III.

THE RED HEIFER.

NUMBERS XIX. 17, 18.

And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that toucheth a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave.

THE ordinance, of which these words furnish a part of the description, and which we now come to consider, was a very extraordinary one, and any meaning to be attached to it would have been perfectly undiscoverable by us, had we not been instructed by the light of the gospel, that all the ceremonies of the

fulfilled all its righteousness, yet was this altogether on our account, and not through any delinquency of his own: neither was there any compulsion laid on him, for he *gave himself* for our sins, a voluntary offering to his Father's justice. He says of himself, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Thus in all these particulars may our thoughts be led, by comparison, to the great divine deliverer of mankind.

Pursuing the account of the law respecting the heifer, we find that being thus selected, it was to be taken by Eleazar, not by Aaron, because this was not a sacrifice, and also, we suppose, because uncleanness, as we shall see, would be contracted in the ceremony, which the high priest was to avoid. By him it was to be taken without the camp, and there killed in his presence: he should sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times before the tabernacle, and then the heifer was to be wholly consumed by fire, and the priest

was moreover to take cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. He was then to wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh, and be unclean until the evening. The person also who had burned the heifer was to wash and bathe in like manner, and be unclean until the evening. Finally, the ashes were to be gathered up by a person previously clean, but who by doing even this would be rendered unclean ; and the ashes were to be laid up in a clean place without the camp, and kept for use as long as they lasted. Now here we recall to our minds the violent and painful death of the divine Saviour, who moreover, that he might answer to these ceremonies even in minute circumstances, suffered without the gate ; and here also we remember his blood of sprinkling. These are comparisons which were frequently drawn for you as we passed through the book of Leviticus.

II. I now proceed, in the second place, to consider the use of this water of separation. It is said to be “ a purification for sin,” and it was to be applied for the purifying of those

who had contracted uncleanness by the touching of the dead body of any person, or of a human bone, or a grave, and for the purifying of all those persons and things that might be in the tent in which any one had died. Very burdensome were the appointments of the Jewish law respecting uncleanness. The acts which rendered unclean were so numerous, and in many cases so unavoidable that they must have been continually contracting it, and thus had often tedious and expensive modes of purification to observe. But we see in these the defiling nature of sin ; and while we bless God that we are not placed under the yoke of so many ceremonial observancies, we should be the more careful to avoid that inward defilement which the soul contracts by unholy thoughts, and sinful desires, and evil passions and tempers, and wicked acts. We should carry the spirit of all these ceremonial cleansings into our dispensation of spiritual things, and learn from them to “ cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” This will render the reading

of the Old Testament profitable to us in every part, even in those which seem to be most entirely abrogated as belonging only to the Jewish law. We should seek every motive that we can hope for from every possible quarter, to purify us from sin. That was the great use of the ordinance which we are now considering, and that is the great object which we should be daily aiming at through the principles of the gospel. Oh, bear this in mind, ye who are placed under a better law and a less burdensome yoke. Think not that sin may be indulged, because you have not now to wash your persons or your raiment : but wash your hearts and not your garments : “ wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings ” from before the Lord’s eyes : “ cease to do evil and learn to do well.”

Let us next observe how the ashes of the heifer were to be used. They were to be mixed with clear water in a vessel ; and then a clean person was to take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it into the mixture, and sprinkle it upon the tent, the vessels, and all the persons

that were in the tent, and upon every one who had touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. He was to sprinkle it upon the unclean on the third day, and again on the seventh day; and on the even of the seventh day that unclean person having purified himself, and washed his clothes, and bathed himself in water, should again be clean. What may we learn from this mixture and the sprinkling of it. The ashes of the burnt heifer will represent to us the merit of the sacrifice of Christ who died for us, and the running water will represent the power and grace of his Holy Spirit, which is called the water of life and the laver of regeneration, while the mixture of the two together will represent to us that inseparable union which ever occurs between the justification and the sanctification of a sinner. The mercy which pardons sin, and the grace which renews the nature, uniformly go together. St. Paul puts them together in his description of the change which was experienced by the Corinthians. When he had described how some of them had been defiled by sin, had been

fornicators and idolaters, and adulterers, and thieves, and drunkards, and other wicked characters, he says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." And again, what learn we from the sprinkling of this mixture by the bunch of hyssop, but the part which faith bears in our salvation? Faith takes up the Lord's mercy and grace and sprinkles them, if we may so speak, upon the sinner's soul. It lays hold of the things prepared for general use, and applies them to the individual, who can derive no benefit from them except he thus receives them unto himself. Never omit any one of these three particulars, I beseech you, in your plan of salvation. Let the sacrifice of Christ, the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit, and the application of both by faith to your own individual case, be continually united, as things which are all absolutely necessary in your salvation. May the divine spirit take hold of his hyssop, and therewith purge you that you may clean and wash you, that you may be whiter than

snow, and sanctify you wholly both in body and spirit.

We may moreover notice how all the persons engaged in this extraordinary ceremony were rendered unclean. Not only was the ordinance itself for the benefit of those who had become unclean, but all the individuals who took any part in the preparation or use of the water, thereby became themselves unclean. The priest who officiated was made unclean ; the man that burnt the heifer was made unclean : he that gathered up the ashes also became unclean ; and he that sprinkled the water, and he that even touched it were in like manner rendered unclean. The Jews say that even Solomon could not understand the mystery, how the same water should pollute the clean person, and cleanse the polluted. But we can at least see how all the persons who were engaged in the sacrifice of Christ, did thereby contract enormous guilt, while, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, they were preparing for other sinners that great atonement and purification which procured and availed for

the taking away of the sin of the world, and even their own sin, when they applied to it for themselves in faith. Oh ! there are many mysteries of mercy far above our knowledge in the death of Christ : and well are we employed when we can gain, from any part of the word of God, from any ceremony, any type, any plain declaration, any thing shadowy, or any thing bright, something which may give us a further insight into his wondrous love, or impress it more strongly on our hearts. There is no mystery in this remarkable ceremony of the law comparable to that contained in the doctrine which tells us in plain words that “ he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

III. Now let us notice, in the third place, the consequences of the neglect and observance of this ceremony. We read thus in the twentieth verse, “ The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord : the water of separation

hath not been sprinkled upon him." The consequences of this unpurified defilement were similar to those which attended the leprosy. He that remained under it could have no intercourse with his family and friends, no participation in the worship of the people, or their privileges. So long as it lasted he lay under the bar of excommunication. And do not we know that if we are not cleansed from our sins by the grace of Christ, we can have no part with the people of God, can enjoy no spiritual privileges, nor hope to enter into heaven? Do we not know that sin, if it remain upon us unremoved from our souls through neglect of application to the blood of Christ, will cut us off from the communion of Saints on earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven? If neglect of the water of separation by the unclean person subjected him to deprivation of all the special blessings of the children of Israel, will not neglect of the sacrifice of Christ subject the sinner to an eternal banishment from the inheritance of the Saints in light? If he who despised Moses' law in

this ceremonial appointment of it suffered such loss “ of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, must he be thought worthy, who hath trampled under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace ?”—But on the other hand, if he who had become ceremonially unclean was purified and cleansed, and restored to his place in the congregation and sanctuary of Israel by the use of the water of separation, he also who lies under the defilement of sin (and who does not ?) shall be purified and cleansed, and restored to the favour of God, and re-admitted to his grace and mercy through the blood of Jesus, when it is applied to his soul in faith. It is even thus, as I observed in the beginning of this sermon, that the Apostle applies this present ceremony. He draws an indisputable conclusion from this ceremonial appointment of the law, that if the water mixed with the ashes of the burnt heifer, gave the external and temporal privileges, the blood of Christ will most certainly

give the inward and spiritual blessing; if the former availed for the removal of ceremonial pollution, much more will the latter be efficacious for the removal of actual sin. Oh! in what a vastly superior condition are we placed by the gospel in this latter dispensation! The Israelites had their external expiations and purifications, but these were only external and "could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience;" for if they could, they would have ceased to be offered, "because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." But this is the very grace in which we stand. The all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ removes the internal guilt and eternal condemnation of sin, and takes away the burden and fear of it from the conscience. The Israelite had his person restored to social intercourse from the uncleanness contracted by the touch of a dead body. The Christian has his conscience set at liberty from the defilement of the dead works in which he had previously trusted, and thus being delivered from that by which he was polluted

and condemned, he serves the living God in righteousness and holiness, without fear, all the days of his life.

Christian brethren, rejoice in this your safe and pleasant state, into which you have access by Christ. See the infinite superiority of the gospel over the law in every particular, and dwell in thought with delightful satisfaction on the full completion of all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law which has been effected for you by the sacrifice of Jesus. Come constantly to the atonement made by his death, that your conscience may be at ease, and that you may have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of his glory. Have recourse to that eternal and Almighty Spirit, by whom the human body of Christ was generated, in which he dwelt without measure, which was sanctified and supported by him, and after it had been put to death in the flesh was quickened by him. Have recourse to him not only to give you peace of conscience and its good and happy testimony within you, but also that faith by which you may be interested in the whole of that perfect

spiritual and complete work of Christ, and that sanctification by which you may be made pure and holy. Be not content, like the Pharisees, to cleanse the outside, while the mind and conscience are defiled, or to garnish yourselves with dead works, while a spiritual life is wanting in your soul ; but seek after inward purity of heart, and real holiness of life, and that fair and cleansed state of the soul, which Jewish purifications typified, but could never give. I press upon you again the needful remembrance that Christ, your Lord, both justifies and purifies, and that these two acts of his grace cannot be separated. They are indissolubly united in the method of his salvation, and cannot be disjoined in the believer's experience. Seek the highest attainments in both, that you may stand complete in Christ, perfect and entire, lacking nothing, feeling yourselves freely and fully justified by faith, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and exhibiting the new man in the image of Christ by the living works of righteousness and holiness.

But you who are still in a state of spiritual

uncleanness must be spoken to otherwise. You must be compared with the unclean Israelite, who was shut out from communion with God and his people, and be told that you have no part nor lot with Christ and his redeemed. You are to be aroused, if it be possible, to a sense of your sin and danger. For this purpose we say to you, that if the touch of a dead body, or a bone, or a grave, rendered the Israelite ceremonially unclean, much more has sin contaminated your soul, and filled you with actual guilt and defilement; and if the personal and temporal inconveniencies were great to which the impurified Jew was subject, much more dreadful are those eternal miseries of the future world to which you are exposed; and if the water of purification was indispensably necessary, by the appointment of God, for him, much more necessary, by the same appointment, is the blood of Christ for you, that you may be cleansed by it from your iniquity; and if that mixed water was to be sprinkled on him by the bunch of hyssop, much more must the blood of Christ be applied to you through

faith, that your conscience may be purged from dead works to serve the living God. Now meditate on these things. Ponder on them deeply in your hearts. Be thoughtful of the guilt and the wrath which sin has brought upon you. Be in fear of the consequences. Desire that they may be averted, and the guilt, yea and even the sin itself, removed. Go to the fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness, and wash therein by faith and be clean. Go to the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, that you may now be purified from all iniquity, and hereafter ascribe dominion and glory unto him that loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood.

SERMON IV.

THE WATER OF MERIBAH.

NUMBERS XX. 13.

This is the water of Meribah ; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.

WE saw, in a former sermon, that the Israelites had been condemned to wander for forty years in the wilderness, as a punishment for their refusal to enter into the promised land, though encouraged to do so by Joshua and Caleb. Of this space of their history the sacred historian had little to record, and now that it is drawing to its close, and they are soon to be put into possession of Canaan, it is distressing to find, that the narrative is resumed with another of those murmurings, of which we have already had so many records, and moreover that it unhappily stands

connected with much that deserves and meets with rebuke even in Moses and Aaron. The former generation were now nearly all of them dead, and a new one had grown up in their room ; yet we find another exhibition of the same discontented and murmuring spirit, which had so strongly characterized their ancestors. Thus we see that corrupt nature is always the same. This spirit is not the fault of this or that individual, of this or the other generation or country ; it is the fault of the race of man : it is the rooted depravity of the nature : therefore one generation after another manifests the same evil dispositions, the same unholy lustings, the same discontent and rebellion. After that the old world had been cut off by the flood, the new one rose up with the same general features of character, and one age after another in the history of the Israelites proves that “ man is by nature very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.”—Here also we find another great truth respecting our fallen nature strikingly exemplified, which is, that “ this infection of nature

doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated, for in this exposition we shall have to notice much faultiness both in Moses and Aaron; and we are taught directly by the New Testament, that “if any man say he hath no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him.”

The occasion of the murmuring of the people at the time here mentioned, is the same as had occurred at an early part of their journey: they murmured for want of water. We saw, in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, that soon after the passage through the Red Sea, the Israelites had murmured on this same account at Rephidim, and that Moses, by the command of God, had struck the rock with his rod, from which water immediately flowed, and followed them on their way. But it had now ceased, and they were again in distress for a necessary supply. The experience which they had formerly had of the power and goodness of God, should have sent them at once to him in prayer and with faith. But alas what is man? What are we ourselves? How much proof have we had of help in

difficulty, and of mercy when most needed, and yet how have we forgotten all these things when a time of trial has come upon us ! How have we given ourselves up to unbelief, despair, and discontent ! Such a poor forgetful and ungrateful creature is man, even in his best estate. Thus in their present necessity of fear did the Israelites start aside like a broken bow : they even passionately wished that they had died in the plague, which had cut off so many of their brethren. Alas, what madness and folly are in the hearts of men ! That judgment was one of a most appalling kind ; yet this want of water, which they might have known the Lord could so easily remedy, is considered, only because it was then present, to be the worse evil of the two. They chide with Moses and Aaron, laying the whole blame upon them, and totally forgetting the presence and interference of God : they accuse them that they had brought them into the wilderness, that they and their cattle might die there ; they complained that their promises of a good and fruitful land had not been fulfilled.

All this is but a picture of our own hearts and ways. Present disappointment and pain deprive us of our right senses. We forget the hand of God in our afflictions or for our help. We murmur against providence, quarrel with instruments, and give way to our passions in a most unholy manner. The clay complains against the potter, and the thing formed says unto him that formed it why dost thou deal with me thus. All this is sad and culpable discontent and rebellion which we thus exhibit.

Moses and Aaron, according to their constant custom, applied unto the Lord: they went from the assembly to the door of the tabernacle; and there fell upon their faces; and then the glory of the Lord appeared to them. Moses was directed to take his rod, and with it in his hand to *speake* unto the rock in the sight of the people, and he was told that so it should give forth water.

Now what did Moses? He “gathered all the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels,

must we fetch you water out of this rock? And he lifted up his hand, and with the rod he smote the rock twice." Herein he committed a great offence. This part of his history is frequently mentioned in different parts of the scriptures, and always with strong disapprobation, and with a remarkable punishment inflicted for it. It is mentioned in the twelfth verse, the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Again in the twenty-fourth verse, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah." And Aaron died on Mount Hor, without the honour of leading the people into Canaan. Again it was declared to Moses in the twenty-seventh chapter and twelfth verse, "Get thee up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel; and when thou hast seen

it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation to sanctify me at the water before their eyes." Three times also is this punishment referred to in the book of Deuteronomy, and always in the same terms, and that although Moses should be permitted to see the land, yet he should not be allowed to enter into it, and always for this reason, because he did not sanctify the Lord in the sight of the people, but rebelled against his commandment. And so it came to pass, that as Aaron died on Mount Hor, so Moses died on Mount Nebo, a peak of the ridge of Abarim, and was excluded from the earthly enjoyment of the promised land.

It is necessary therefore that we should enquire into the particulars of this offence of Moses and Aaron, on account of which they were so signally punished.

1. Here was evidently, first, great warmth and undue anger of spirit. This appears by the words in which Moses spake : "hear now,

ye rebels,” said he. It is very true that they were then rebelling against God, and Moses had unquestionably met with great provocation from them. Yet he did not well to be angry, and to utter such bitter words. His fault in this respect is thus noticed by the Psalmist, “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” Moses, as to his general character, was remarkably meek; but here he was overcome by passion. What a lesson may we read here against the indulgence of angry feelings, and the expression of harsh and intemperate words. How careful should we be to bridle our tongue! and how fervently and frequently should we pray, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

2. Here was, secondly, too much self-sufficiency. It appears in his saying, “must we fetch you water out of the rock?” Moses certainly now exposed himself to a charge which on another occasion had been made

against him most unjustly ; that is, he took too much upon him. Was it *he* that should bring water out of the rock ? Was he to permit the people to suppose even for a moment that it was by his own power and might that the rock should send forth water ? Alas, he was forgetful, and he spake more highly of himself than he ought to speak. And thus it is that pride is the parent of passion. Brethren, the first and last lesson which we have to learn is humility. Humility will keep our spirits even, and form the best guard of our lips. Under its blessed influence we shall never ascribe any thing to our own power, wisdom, or merit, but all to the Lord. Under its influence we shall never speak contemptuously or harshly to others ; we shall be meek and patient, kind and courteous to all.

3. Thirdly, here was disobedience. Moses did not simply as he was directed. He was bidden to *speak* to the rock, but instead of speaking to it, he *struck* it. In the former occasion he had been *commanded* to strike it, but that was no reason why he should depart from his instructions now. God chooses to

vary his means, in order to show that the sufficiency is all of him. Moses spake indeed as we have seen, but it was to the people, and he had better have held his peace : so that he sinned doubly : he spake where he ought to have been silent ; he struck where he ought only to have spoken. This also evidently had its origin in the heat and intemperance of spirit into which he was betrayed. My brethren, let us take care that we never either fall short of what God has said, nor go beyond it. Let us never think of taking our own way, when the Lord has prescribed his.

4. Fourthly, unbelief also was found in this their offence. They are charged with it in the twelfth verse. This indeed was at the root of the whole matter, as it is of all our sins. Did we at all times fully believe in the authority of God we should never have a thought of acting in any thing but exactly according to his directions. But unbelief is the great sin of our hearts, and the great cause of all omission of that which is good, and of all commission of that which is evil. It was the origin of all the sin and misery of

the Israelites in all ages. They transgressed the law of God, and were visited with his judgments, because they believed not his word. Their dispersion and wretchedness through the whole period of the gospel is owing to their unbelief in Christ, who came unto his own, and his own received him not. It is now especially the damning sin: "he that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "If ye believe not that I am he," saith the Saviour, "ye shall die in your sins." Unbelief not only contemns the threatenings and promises of God, but it rejects the remedy which he has provided for the recovery of our souls from the ruin of sin and the fall. Unbelief, I especially mean unbelief in Christ, is the one universal destroyer of the souls of all who perish.

5. Fifthly and lastly, here was great dishonour done to God before the people. This effect of the unbelief and disobedience of Moses and Aaron is repeated in almost every place of scripture where their offence is noticed. It is expressed by the phrase, "Ye did

not sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel." As this is uniformly stated to be the great cause of the Lord's indignation against them, let us consider the import of it. To sanctify the Lord is to give all reverence and honour to him in every circumstance in which we may be placed; and it is to maintain and express an unshaken trust in him in all seasons of doubt, difficulty, and danger, and a firm adherence to him, and a full acknowledgement of him in all circumstances. It is to bear a believing testimony to him at all times. You will find several instances of the Lord's care to sanctify his own great name, that is, to have himself held up to honour and respect among all people. In the eighth chapter of Isaiah we hear the Lord saying to those who were afraid of the power, multitude, and union of their enemies, "Lay ye not a confederacy, neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; but sanctify the Lord, God of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." So again St. Peter says, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, and be not

afraid of their terror, neither be troubled ; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Now this was not done by Moses and Aaron on the present occasion. They did not lead the minds of the people to God. They did not tell them of the former miraculous exertions of his power. They did not bid them expect relief from him. They said nothing of his ability to supply their need, nor of his mercy and grace to all who served and honoured him. They did not even simply use the means which he had directed, and speak to the rock : but they chode the people, and struck the rock in anger and impatience. Thus they gave no honour to the Lord in this affair. Their minds were more full of their own angry feelings, than of a due regard to him, and so they sanctified him not in the eyes of the people. This was their great offence. And for this they were both of them refused an entrance into the land of Canaan. Highly as they had been distinguished in their respective offices, long and laboriously as they had guided and judged the children of Israel, yet they were

not allowed to receive that fruit of their labour.

One thing, above all others, is to be observed from this history, which is, that God will punish the provocations of even his own servants and children. We do not say that Moses and Aaron were shut out of the kingdom of heaven, but they suffered great temporal disgrace and loss for their fault in this matter. We do not say that the saints of God shall be utterly cut off from their heavenly rest for every offence of which they may be guilty ; but we do say that they will meet with rebukes and chastisements from God ; that he will deprive them of many spiritual honours, and put them to shame before men ; will probably throw a cloud over their evidences, and make them full of terror and dismay ; will make their end inglorious, nor suffer their sun to set in splendour. Thus he will “visit their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges.” Oh ! let no child of God think it a light thing to be unwatchful, and to fall into any sin of the flesh or the spirit. Let him be afraid of [provoking

the Lord to anger by any forgetfulness of his presence, or by any neglect to sanctify him in the eyes of men. Numberless occasions occur in our intercourse with others, in which we should shew the sense that we have of his presence, and the honour which is due to his authority. Often are we called to sanctify him in the eyes of others, and often it is to be feared that we fail to do it through some false shame or cowardice, through want of that deep and constant feeling of reverence, awe, and love, which he requires of us. How many may be deprived of honours and comforts on this account, which they would otherwise receive it is impossible to say, or what diminution of glory they may suffer for it even in the world to come. No doubt there is a great defect in our not always standing up for God as we ought to do, in not always at least exhibiting in our own persons that powerful impression on the mind of what is due to him, which is required of us. "Them that honour me I will honour," saith the Lord; and no doubt he keeps many back from honour, as he did Moses here,

because they do not faithfully and unflinchingly honour him.

But if the saints thus suffer for their offences, what will be the case of the wicked, who never honour God, but are always dishonouring him? "If judgment begin in the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" : And "if the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?" Oh! that the irreligious and profane might see, in this punishment of Moses and Aaron, what a controversy our just and holy God must have with *them*! Where there is no obedience, no service, no love and reverence of God, but the whole tenor of the life and the general character mark the unholy and unsanctified man, the man of the world, the servant of Satan and sin, what shall the end be? Certainly it will be an exclusion from the heavenly Canaan, an "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." Certainly the last sentence will be, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil

and his angels.” And how can this be escaped? No how, but by a timely repentance, and a change of heart and life, and an earnest application for mercy through that atoning sacrifice which the eternal Son presented on the cross to his Father’s justice. And these things are all the work of his grace. They are to be sought earnestly by every one that is in alarm on account of his sinful state. If any of you be ready to tremble for fear of the wrath of God, let him go in prayer and faith for an interest in Christ, for repentance unto life, and a conversion of heart. These things are the gifts of God, they are the operations of his Spirit. God will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him; and that Spirit will work in them “both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.”

SERMON V.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

NUMBERS XXI. 5, 6.

And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

ON the first head of this sermon, brethren, I have to set before you another instance of sin in the Israelites. Oh! how often have we had occasion, in expounding their history, to notice their rebellion against the Lord. We know how he rained bread from heaven upon them, and man did eat angels' food. We know how he miraculously supplied them with water

through the whole of their journeys in the wilderness. But we here find them again, as in the eleventh chapter, dissatisfied with the Lord's provision, discontented with the nature of the food, and the quantity of the water with which they were furnished, without care of their own, except to gather the one and drink the other. "There is no bread," said they, "neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread." They call it, "This light bread," as though it were not strengthening enough to support them; and they loathed the constant repetition of it day after day.

Now, brethren, when I think that the Manna, with which the Israelites were fed, is a representation of the rich provision which is made in the gospel of Christ for the life and nourishment of our souls, I am led to think with grief and sorrow of heart of you, who think lightly of him, and loathe the true bread of heaven, yea and also the sincere milk of the word, which is set before you. Your souls delight in fleshly gratifications, and lust after sensual pleasures. You delight

not in spiritual enjoyments, and find no gratification in the pure and holy refreshments of heaven. Though God has in mercy sent you his word of salvation, by which your souls might be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, yet is there in you no hunger and thirst after righteousness ; and sweet as is the preaching of the gospel to the taste of many, yet your full souls loath the honeycomb. Many prophets and righteous men of old desired to see and hear the things which you do, but could not. If Tyre and Sidon had had such evidence of the power and grace of God, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Reject not, I beseech you, the mercies of God against your own souls, lest in wrath he should leave you in this contempt of them. Nay there is even cause to apprehend a yet greater judgment, even that of his answering you according to the desires of your hearts ; for so he did to the Israelites in the former instance as recorded in the eleventh chapter. At that time, for “ he gave them their own desire ; they were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the

wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel." Ah! brethren, the heaviest judgment that can befall us may often be that of giving us our desires, and letting us not be estranged from our lust. For thus sin often becomes its own punishment, and foolish men are plagued because of, and by, their offence. But whether God should ever send any direct punishment upon you or not for your contempt of his word, remember that the privation of it is itself one of his heaviest judgments. Many are the scriptures which set this before us in the most striking terms. Thus in the prophet Amos, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, and they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it. In that day shall the young men, and the fair virgins faint for thirst." Again, in the book of Revelation, Christ saith unto those against whom he had

somewhat because they had left their first love, “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Thus God punishes men for a rejection of his word by a removal of his word, or of the influence of his grace, which alone gives it efficacy in the heart, and without which they live in folly and sin without restraint.

II. But it is time that I proceed to a second head, and consider the particular manner in which God punished the Israelites on the present occasion for their loathing of the Manna.

We read thus, “The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.” The description *fiery* refers perhaps to their colour and the bright hue of their skins, or to the hot and burning pain which their poisonous bite produced. This took effect speedily, and being incurable by any human means, many were the corpses which it strewed in the

wilderness. In this way the Lord showed his wrath against the people, and in it we see another method by which God can punish those who transgress against him. There is nothing in heaven or earth which he cannot use as an instrument of destruction. Noxious reptiles, poisonous serpents, devouring locusts, ferocious beasts of prey, the sword of man, the fire of heaven, the waters of the earth, the sweep of the tornado, the convulsions of earthquakes, the fall of towers,—Oh! I need not proceed,—innumerable are the means which God has at his disposal for the punishment of evil-doers. And all that I have mentioned, and all the forms of death and terror which this present world can furnish, are nothing to the infinite punishment which is reserved in store for the judgment of the last day.

This brought the people to their confessions and prayers. Such is always the intention and use of punishments, and alas! it is lamentable that we should so often need them for this purpose. But oh! it is merciful in God when he sends them with this view, and sanctifies them to the production of

repentance, and the putting away of our sin. Here the Israelites come to Moses, and say, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee." Yes, they had spoken against God and his servants; but "when he slew them, then they sought him;" they confess their sin to Moses, and intreat him to intercede for them. We cannot help thinking here of the prodigal son, who, when he came to himself, returned as a penitent and cried, "Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. Here we see how men are compelled by their sufferings to seek the prayers of God's ministers whom they had before neglected and despised, and perhaps reviled and insulted. Misfortunes and sufferings make great changes in men's feelings and conduct, sometimes only for a season, but sometimes with a most happy permanency of effect. Many have fallen again into their old habits and sins, when their afflictions have ceased; but many have begun in their sufferings a regular course of penitence and piety,

from which they have never again departed. And well may such say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted; before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy commandments."

Moses was a man of a most patient and forgiving spirit. He at once listened to their cry, forgave them for himself, and prayed to God for them. And God heard his prayer, and appointed a wonderful mode of deliverance.

III. Let this form the subject of our third head. We read of it thus, "The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Here was another miracle. There was nothing in the representation of the creature by which the wound had been inflicted that could possibly tend to effect a cure: but it was God's appointment, in which

he exercised their faith, and tested their obedience, and it proved efficacious to every one who directed his eye to it in faith and hope.

But we know the use which was made of this circumstance by our blessed Lord, and learn the intention with which God adopted this method of cure. It was to shew forth the grace of his gospel, and the mode by which he would save sinners through his Son. Hear what Christ says in the third chapter of John and fourteenth verse, “ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Now mark how suitably the Old Testament here represents to us the condition of our souls, and the mode of relief which is proposed to us in the gospel. In the earliest part of man's history, Satan is represented to us as the serpent by whom our race was ruined, and who brought us into a state of corruption and sin. Through his conquest in that day, the poison of sin rankles in our

whole constitution ; the body and the soul are affected by it ; the body is full of disease, and the soul is depraved ; the body will die, and the soul will be cast into hell. Not more surely did the bite of the fiery serpents destroy the Israelites, than the old serpent, which is the devil, or Satan, has infected our whole nature with a fatal disease, through which both body and soul will be destroyed in hell, except we apply to that mode of deliverance which God has in mercy proposed to us in the gospel. This is represented to us by the lifting up of the serpent of brass. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so the Son of man was lifted up. Jesus was raised up on high upon the cross, and he is also uplifted on the sound of his gospel, in order that men may look upon him by faith, and be healed of their mortal diseases. From his cross he seems to cry, " Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ;" and the explicit declaration of the gospel sets forth, as I have already quoted it, that " whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This act

of the mind and heart is frequently represented to us by the act of the eye; and in the look of distress, and entreaty, and hope, with which a poor beggar looks to one who he knows can relieve him, we see a picture of that inward emotion of the soul, which the convinced sinner feels when he applies, believing, unto Christ. There can scarcely be a more lively representation, by any outward sign, of that internal application of the soul to Christ, upon which its deliverance from all the sad consequences of the fall depends. And thus we have set before us, by this type of the Old Testament, both the disease and the mode of cure, the evil and its remedy. It presents to us two of the great essential truths of the gospel, the corruption of man's nature through original sin, and his salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In application of this deliverance, let us mark two circumstances connected with it. First we observe that God in his wonderful mercy gave it to them when they had the least reason to expect one. They had just been murmuring against a former mercy, and

type also, which was equally striking. They had been quarrelling with the Manna which God presented to them not only for their immediate subsistence, but as a representation of the manner in which our souls are to feed on Christ, the true bread of heaven. And here again, in the appointment made to deliver them from the fatal bite of the serpents, they had a further type of the merciful plan of Christ's redemption. Oh ! it is wonderful that God should thus renew and multiply his mercies, when he might justly take away even those which he has already bestowed upon us. Next, we may notice that this mode of deliverance from the poisonous bite was given to the Israelites when they were penitent. They were crying, we have sinned for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee, and they were imploring the intercession of Moses. Oh ! that you in like manner may become pricked in heart, feel and confess your sinfulness, repent and turn unto the Lord, and seek the help of Christ, our all-prevailing mediator. While you continue impenitent and unmoved in

conscience, and feel neither your sin nor your malady and danger, you will not seek for deliverance, nor find mercy. But whenever you are stung with remorse for past neglect and contempt of God's mercy, for despising the provision made for your souls in his gospel, then will you also begin to pray, and praying, you will be heard and delivered.

Now, brethren, the Israelites would all look up we may be well assured, to the serpent of brass, as soon as they found themselves attacked by one of these destructive reptiles; but are you in equal haste to look up to the Lord Jesus Christ, for the healing of that infinitely worse spiritual disease with which your souls are infected? I fear that there are many who do not apply to him for their recovery from sin, and its fatal consequences. And why are you not as anxious and as full of haste to obtain mercy for your souls as they were to escape the effects of the poison on their bodies? Simply because you think more of your bodies than of your souls; you are more afraid of death

than of judgment ; you have a greater terror of sickness than of sin ; you can feel what the body suffers, but you do not perceive the malady under which the soul is labouring. It is as our Lord said, “ They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” Then what do you mean by confessing, as here you do every time you join with us in our public prayer that “ we have no health in us ? ” I despair of your ever feeling the real state of your own case, of your ever understanding either the Old Testament or the New, of your ever worshiping rightly in the services of the church, of your ever sincerely applying to Christ, of your ever obtaining salvation, even the salvation of your souls, until you become truly sensible of this great truth of the gospel : until you really feel the nature of the sin which is within you, you will not cry unto Christ for help as the Israelites cried unto Moses, and you will not consequently receive that healing grace from him and his sacrifice on the cross, of which the brazen serpent forms so striking a type. What if

any of these people had refused to look upon it? What if they had resorted to other remedies? or what if they had given themselves up as lost and laid down in despair? Most assuredly they had died. Had they from any cause whatever neglected to avail themselves of the remedy proposed, they must inevitably have perished. It is so with you. If you believe not on Christ, you must die in your sins. The seeds of death are in your bodies; the infection of sin is in your souls; you are hurrying to the grave; you are hastening to the second death; you are corrupted by sin; you are living in sin; you will die in sin, yes, in sin with all its power and all its condemnation upon you, if you do not now look and pray to the Almighty Saviour, who alone can take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, whose name is called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins, whose name is the only name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved, whose name, through faith in his name can make you whole.

But is there one here who is stricken in heart under a deep sense of his sin and danger? Oh! let him hear the voice of hope and peace. Does he feel in his soul the power of sin, and the poison of Satan? and has he before his eyes that eternal death which naturally is the unavoidable consequence? Let him listen with gratitude and joy; and let him embrace with instant faith that most encouraging declaration of our Lord, that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Oh! look upon him in your present fear and grief with godly sorrow and true repentance for your sins, and ere long he will give you “the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Bring your wounded heart to him in faith, and he will pour in the balm and wine which shall sooth and heal. “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Behold the Saviour of men lifted up upon the cross, and stretching from it the arms of love and mercy, to

receive and pardon, to justify freely, and to sanctify wholly, all who come unto him in faith.

My Christian friends and brethren, believers in the Lord Jesus, who have already looked by faith on him who hung upon the cross, oh ! let your gratitude to him be great and manifest for that wondrous power by which he came and destroyed the works of the devil, and for that wondrous mercy by which he has recovered your souls from the power of sin. How great was the force of that disease, and how certain the death which would have ensued, had not he come to take away your sins by the sacrifice of himself ! And how would you still have remained ignorant of your disease, impenitent and unbelieving, like too many around you, had not he sent his Spirit to enlighten, and convince you, and to pour into your hearts the gift of faith ! Oh ! live by that faith which has been vouchsafed to you. Let that heavenly grace be in daily exercise. It is not enough that you have looked once upon him. Lift up your eyes continually to the same glorious object. Thus he will carry

on the work of healing within you. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus will make you free from the law of sin and death. Sin will be daily diminishing and holiness increasing. You will not only pass from death unto life, but you will go from strength unto strength, and derive from him a larger measure of spiritual health and vigour. Yes, brethren, we grow in grace by constantly "looking unto Jesus." Feed also on the heavenly manna which is provided for you. Despise it not as light bread like these fretful and perverse Israelites. Esteem it above your necessary food. It is that which will nourish the life of God within you, and will maintain and strengthen it till it issues in life eternal.

SERMON VI.

BALAK SENDS FOR BALAAM.

NUMBERS XXII. 6.

Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people : for they are too mighty for me : peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land : for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

THIS chapter begins a very interesting part of the history contained in the book of Numbers. It introduces us to Balaam, one of the most extraordinary characters in the Old Testament, and affords us an insight into the dispensations of the Lord, as also into the secret workings and motives of the human heart, which may afford us much of useful instruction. This first sermon on the

character of Balaam, and the circumstances connected with his conduct, will be chiefly of a historical kind, but I shall endeavour to mingle such observations on the narrative as may make it useful for our own instruction in righteousness.

The children of Israel, at the time of which we are now to speak, were encamped in the plains of Moab, near the river Jordan, opposite to Jericho, and ready to enter into the promised land. When they thus appeared in his country, Balak, the king of the Moabites, and his people were sore afraid of them. They had seen what the Israelites had done unto the Amorites, and dreaded a similar destruction. Instigated by this fear, Balak did not draw out his forces to fight with Israel, but he had recourse to other arts, and called in as his auxiliary a man whom he supposed to have such intercourse and influence with heaven or hell, as to secure efficacy to any curse which he might pronounce against them. The man was Balaam, a well known diviner, who stands out in awful prominence in the word of God

as a man of much knowledge but of no grace. Balak sent him this message, "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." Now here is a man of violence and wrong. Why should he desire to smite the Israelites, who had done him no harm? If he thought that Balaam could bless as well as curse whom he pleased, why did he not choose the blessing rather than the curse? Why not desire to be himself protected from the injury which he feared, rather than to have power to injure those who were inoffensive, and, at least as yet, had done him no wrong? Surely if he had been a man of peace, he would have desired nothing more than to be enabled to live peaceably with them, and that they might pass forward from him without strife. But

wars and bloodshed arise from the evil spirit that is in us, and through which men and nations are more disposed to aggressions and warfare, than to concessions and kindness, and acts of friendship and mutual assistance. The messenger of Balak departed, we read, "With the rewards of divination in their hands." This was the passport to Balaam's favour. This was what they knew he desired, and for which he was ready to let himself out to hire. He caught eagerly at the bribe which was brought him, and hoped that he might be permitted to further their views. Therefore, "he said to them, lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." An enquiry here naturally arises in our minds. Did Balaam know that the Israelites were under the special care and providence of God? that they were a people who had been distinguished by wonderful marks of his favour? and were chosen to be peculiarly his people, whom he was guiding to a land which he had promised to give them? All this, I think, Balaam must have known.

And if he knew this, here, at the very first communication of the messengers of Balak, he should have taken his stand. He should have told them that this people was blessed and that it would be vain and impious to attempt to curse them. He should have sent back his advice to the king of Moab, to let them pass safely and without molestation, and even to court their friendship and render them service. But be this as it may, the next verse in the narrative decided the matter. God did speak to Balaam that night, and "God said unto Balaam, thou shalt not go with them ; thou shalt not curse the people ; for they are blessed." Here was a positive command, and plain and direct information. The words were few and decisive; they removed all doubt, and precluded every attempt to hurt them. "Thou shalt not go with them ; thou shalt not curse the people ; for they are blessed." Pause a moment and think that this is the high privilege and happy state of all the Lord's people, at this day as much as ever. They have been, and are, and will be, blessed of their God and Saviour,

and I wot that those whom *he* blesses are blessed indeed. He will preserve and keep them, protect and defend them, and the machinations of their enemies and even of the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

Now observe that Balaam did not make a faithful report in the morning. He only said to the princes of Balak, "Get you into your land, for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." The Lord refused to give him leave, does he say? Does he speak of what God had said to him in these softened terms? The Lord had positively forbidden him to go. But he is also unfaithful in keeping back the main part of the truth. He did not tell them that he was strictly commanded not to curse them, that it would be wicked and dangerous both for them and him to seek to do them any evil, for that they were blessed. The princes of Moab went back to their king, and what did they say to him? "Balaam refuseth to come with us." Here is another partial account. Not a word is said of what even Balaam had declared, that the Lord had refused to give him leave; so that through

two faithless mediums of communication the Lord's positive prohibitions, "Thou shalt not go with them," "Thou shalt not curse the people," are frittered down to this, "Balaam refuseth to come with us." What a withholding of the whole truth? What a false misrepresentation of the real case! Thus alas it is that kings, and all who are in authority, are often misled by the garbled reports which are given to them by those whom they employ, by the concealments which they make, and the mis-statements which they use. We do not wonder that Balak was not without hope of carrying his point. He might well conclude that he had not offered a sufficient reward. He therefore sends again, more honourable princes than before, and he bids high for the services of Balaam. He says, "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come, therefore I pray thee, curse me this people." Balaam's reply to this was good in its beginning. "If Balak would

give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." So far this was well, and Balaam had nothing more to do than to refuse to listen to any more persuasions, or make any further attempts. He ought to have cut the matter short at once, and to have sent them back with his former answer given more faithfully than before. But what follows. He says, "Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more." And what did he expect the Lord would say more than he had said before? Did he think that God was a man that he should lie, or the Son of man that he should repent? God had already said, "Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed," and did not Balaam know that "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance?" My brethren, it is far more evident what Balaam *wished*, than what he *expected*. He wished for the honour which Balak proffered him. He coveted some of the silver and gold that was in his house. And for these he

would have been glad to curse the very people, of whom God had already said so distinctly that they were blessed. We do not ascribe this motive to him without proof. St. Jude, speaking of some ungodly men in his own days, compares them with this man among others, and says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and have followed the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Corah?" Thus we see that Balaam ran into his error, and persevered in it, through desire of reward. This was the secret spring of his again tampering with the princes of Balak, and trifling with God. He did not repel their proposal, as St. Peter did that of Simon the magician, "Thy money perish with thee." He did not dismiss them, as our blessed Lord did the tempter, who "shewed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said unto him, all these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The answer was instant and decisive, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only

shalt thou serve." Oh, my dear brethren, "take heed and beware of covetousness, for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Be always faithful to God, and sincere with men. Keep a straightforward course in the path of duty in every particular in which it is clearly known, and let nothing tempt you to swerve from it. Never desire to go contrary to the will of God; never wish it to be altered; never believe for a moment that God can be prevailed on to permit you to do wrong, that you may gain some worldly advantage by it. This was the error of Balaam; God grant that it may never be yours. He coveted an evil covetousness to himself; oh! that you may never suffer from the same cause.

We find that God permitted him to go. He allowed the prophet to have his own way: but he warned him that he should be entirely under his controul, and not be able to utter a word according to his own wish.

He says, "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." Balaam caught at the permission, hoping no doubt that as God had gone thus far, he would finally allow him to gratify Balak and thereby to get his reward. He did not wait for the summons in the morning, as God had directed him, but was in all haste to set out, as eager to go, as they were to take him with them.—But "God's anger was kindled because he went." What? could God's anger be kindled at his going, when he had given him permission to go? Yes; God was angry at his *desire* to go when he had forbidden him; angry at the *motive* from which he went; angry at the *purpose* for which he proceeded. God sometimes grants the wicked desires of men's hearts in anger and not in mercy. Whenever we ask any thing that is according to his will, we may hope that he will give it; but if we ask any thing contrary to his holiness and therefore offensive to him, oh! that he may then scatter it to the winds, and not punish us with the

grant of our foolish desires, for assuredly that would be for our hurt.

And now we come to a very extraordinary part of this history of Balaam. God sent an angel who stood in the way to oppose his progress. Balaam saw not his adversary, but the ass on which he rode beheld him, and to avoid the drawn sword which he held in his hand, turned out of the way into the open field to avoid him. Little cause had Balaam to boast of his visions, when now his ass saw more than he did. And many have God and the angels of God against them, who do not see it ; for Satan blinds the minds of the children of disobedience ; and if the righteous are sometimes surrounded, like Elijah, with chariots of fire and horses of fire for their protection, the wicked are often in danger of the destroying angels of the Lord, and are sometimes suddenly cut down by them, as when one of them went forth and destroyed the whole of Sennacherib's army. Balaam smote his ass to turn her into the way ; the angel of the Lord removed and stood in another part of the road, where there

was a wall of a vineyard on either side of it. Again the ass beheld the angel, and feared to proceed; she thrust herself to the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against it, and again he smote her. Then the angel went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or the left. And being thus utterly unable to pass him, she fell down under Balaam, and his anger was greatly kindled, and he smote her with a staff, more heavily than before. And now the Lord did a strange thing, and gave utterance to the ass. She spake to him with human voice, and enquired, "what have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?" He answered, "because thou hast mocked me;" and instigated by his passion, he exclaimed, "I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee." This miracle has been sneered at by infidels, as ridiculous and impossible. But why should it be a thing impossible that God should enable a beast to speak. We know not how we ourselves utter intelligible sounds, and he who gave man the

use of speech can confer it, permanently or for a season, upon any of his creatures. The fact is unquestionable. It is here plainly stated, and is confirmed by the inspired authority of the Apostle Peter.—There seems cause for our surprise however that Balaam was not astonished. Some think that he had been accustomed to such things by his trafficking with evil spirits; others suppose that his fury had the mastery of him, and absorbed every other emotion. The sacred history does not satisfy our curiosity. The fact, however, as I have said, is confirmed by St. Peter, who speaking of the same characters as those described by St. Jude, says of them, “which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man’s voice, forbid the madness of the prophet.” Here you may again perceive what was the motive of his whole journey and scheme: “he loves the wages of unrighteousness.” We have the authority therefore of two

passages of the New Testament for saying that this was the root and spring of Balaam's offence, his besetting sin. And oh, into what irreligion and worldliness, into what fraud and injustice, into what vices and crimes, does the love of gold betray men! It is one of the devil's principal temptations, by which he carries them captive. The Lord God by his grace deliver us all from that sin. But now we find that God permitted Balaam to see the danger to which he had been exposed, and from which the ass had preserved him. "The Lord opened his eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand and he bowed down his head and fell flat on his face." The heavenly messenger reasoned with him for his treatment of his ass. He told him that he had come to withstand him, "because his way was perverse before him," and that if the ass had not turned from him, Balaam had surely been slain. This brought him to fear, and to an acknowledgment of his fault. He says "I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore if it

displease thee, I will get me back again." It is true that he knew not that the angel withstood him, but, if he had not been blinded by his cupidity, he might have known that he was going against the will and word of the Lord, and that his way was perverse before him. Oh that we might see the evil of our ways, before we are taught to know it by its consequences, that so we may not enter into it, and expose ourselves to the wrath of a sin-punishing God. And now does the Lord send him back? No, he sends him forward. He sends him to make him an unwilling instrument in his hands for blessing his people. He sends him that he may incur the trouble of the journey, and yet lose the reward. He goes to do the very contrary of what he wished, as in the next sermon we shall see.

Here pause, brethren, and in application, contemplate the character of Balaam, a graceless man though much gifted, a worldly-minded man though favoured with divine communications, with a heart set upon the things of earth though heavenly views had been in some measure opened to him.—

There is scarcely a more awful character recorded in scripture. Surely it will teach us how much better it is to have a gracious disposition, than an abundance of knowledge, and make us desire the gifts of piety and charity, rather than those which are more specious and showy, which create admiration, astonishment, and perhaps envy, in others, but do not affect our own hearts with the fear and love of God.—We here evidently perceive that direct communications from heaven, and great knowledge of some divine things are not of themselves available to salvation, and may be bestowed on such as are no favourites with God. The devils have far more insight into the things of the world to come than we have; and they cry “what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth.” “The devils believe and tremble.” The devils know much more of God than we can do, and they hate him, and are themselves consigned to everlasting torments. So in the early ages of the gospel, extraordinary powers and gifts were bestowed on some whose hearts were not right with God. We read the words of the

Lord Jesus which run thus, “Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophecied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The piety of the heart and the holiness of the life, are the only things which are really acceptable to God, the graces which he bestows exclusively on the objects of his favour. Men may be great prophets, and great preachers, may be admired and courted, sought after and sent for, and if they have also really the fear of God and the love of Christ in their hearts, we may glorify God for them; but if they are destitute of these internal and sanctifying graces, they are nothing and worse than nothing. Whatever honour they may have among men, they will have none of that which cometh from God: while many a one that passes through life unnoticed and unknown, loving his God and Saviour, obeying his will, and walking by his word, stands high in the estimation of him, who looketh at the heart.

Oh ! then, my brethren, seek the real grace of God in Christ, which may convert your hearts, and renew you in his likeness. Beware of acting contrary to your known duty in any matter. Oh ! fear the seductions of evil men, and the allurements of earthly wealth and honours. These are the devil's gilded baits by which he captivates men's souls. Live in the service of Christ, and seek your portion from him. So will he be to you what he was to Israel. He will be your protector from all evil ; he will guide you into all good. Men may curse but he will bless. They may seek to do you evil, but he will make them minister to your good.

SERMON VII.

ATTEMPTS OF BALAK AND BALAAM.

NUMBERS XXIII. 7, 8.

And he took up his parable and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?

IN the last exposition we saw something of the character of Balaam, a man unto whom God had given some discernment of divine things, and who was considered in the character of a prophet and soothsayer, and supposed to be possessed of much more supernatural power than he really possessed. Instigated by his covetous desire to obtain the rewards which Balak had promised him, he

came earnestly desirous to comply with his wishes, and to curse the Israelites. He came in direct contradiction of the declared will of God. God had miraculously opposed his progress, when notwithstanding he was determined to go; the angel had threatened his life, and the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, had forbidden the madness of the prophet. Still he went: and we have now to consider two attempts which these associates made to procure the accomplishment of their wishes, and the manner in which they were frustrated to their utter disappointment, vexation, and rage.

I. They begin the first attempt by preparing sacrifices. By the direction of Balaam seven altars are erected, and a bullock and a ram offered upon each of them to induce God to favour them. Well might the reproof have been addressed to Balaam which was afterwards given to Saul, "Hath the Lord as much delight in sacrifices and offerings as in obeying the voice of the Lord: behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs." But, blinded by his

own covetousness, Balaam thought that God would be pleased with this large offering made to him, and goes and tells him with self-approbation what he had done. And now God does what he had told him should be the case: he puts a word into his mouth, and sends him back to Balak to pronounce it, under a powerful influence from himself, compelling him, even against his interest and his will, to declare it as it was given. This was the word, or at least a part of it, which I have just read to you as my text. In them he acknowledges what was the object of his journey, and it renders the words which follow much more striking when he says, "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, saying, come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel." Brought for this purpose, and wishing to fulfil it, that he might receive the promised rewards, the Spirit of God compels him to say, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Here he states the utter impossibility of all attempts to injure those against whom God has no controversy.

Here were his selected people, going to the accomplishment of his own high purpose, and nothing which man could do was able to prevent it.

Now this declaration, looked at in a spiritual view, is most encouraging to every true believer. He is hence assured that if the Lord be not against him, no powers of earth or hell can materially hurt him. He may calculate upon having those who will hate, and desire to destroy him, and who by various means will attempt to do it. But if the Lord be on my side, may the true believer say, "if the Lord be on my side, when men rise up against me they shall not swallow me up quick, however wrathfully they may be displeased at me." For by the prospective wisdom and almighty power of God, all the desires of his enemies shall fail, and their machinations be rendered abortive. Safely may he say with the Apostle, "The Lord is on my side, and I will not fear what man can do unto me." If he be in the way of duty, if he be going according to the will and word of God, God will protect him from

his enemies, whether they be the kings of the earth, endeavouring to crush the church of God, or whether they be the powers of hell, called to their aid by impious incantations.

But further, Balaam was not only compelled to declare his own inability to curse and defy the people of God, but he found a word put into his mouth which proclaimed their greatness and glory. Viewing them from the high place on which he stood, and seeing their encampments stretched out in the valley below him, he breaks out into this prophetic declaration; "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Here is a very remarkable prediction respecting the Jewish nation, which has been fulfilling through all ages; it has uniformly been their great peculiarity, and continues to

be such even at the present day ; “ the people shall dwell alone.” Israel was a nation chosen of the Lord. They were his peculiar people. By their laws and ceremonies, their statutes and ordinances, they were separated from all other nations. Their knowledge and worship of the true God formed a broad line of demarkation between them and all the nations of the world, sunk in idolatry and ignorance. Through every successive period of their history, this was ever their great distinction ; they were a people that dwelt alone ; they were strongly discriminated from all others. And still this same feature remains. They are now, for their sins, and especially for their rejection of Christ, scattered about in all countries, yet they dwell alone ; they are separate from all people ; they are not reckoned among the nations. Their own strong peculiarities, and the antipathies and prejudices of all, Christians, Mohammedans, and Pagans, still keep them unmingled with those among whom they dwell, and in many cases without participation in even the common privileges of

citizenship. As God made Balaam to declare his purposes, so he makes all to fulfil them, unwittingly or unwillingly. Nations, kings, and private persons act freely, and according to their own objects and plans, but God's counsel stands, and is continually proceeding to its final end, as he would have it, through their instrumentality, though often it is in their heart, and their hands attempt to hinder it. This is ever an abiding source of consolation and support to those who have put their trust in God.

It is moreover a peculiarity in all the true and spiritual people of God, that they too dwell alone. Through the influence of their own principles, and the hatred and opposition of the men of the world, they are greatly separated from them. Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, renouncing the devil the world and the flesh, they are marked by a holy singularity, and are reckoned as a distinct and separate people. This, as it is willingly submitted to by themselves, is their honour; for it is God's mark of distinction which he has put upon them; and as it is

forced upon them by others, who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;" it is their safeguard, which delivers them from many alluring and ensnaring temptations. Oh! be not afraid of thus dwelling alone, ye who desire to be the people of God. Mingle not with the men of the world in their habits and pursuits, "Come out from among them and be ye separate." This marked peculiarity of the people of God remains among them under every dispensation, that they are not conformed to this world.

Balaam proceeds. Prophetically beholding the vast increase of the Israelites after their establishment in Canaan, he exclaims, "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." The population of Israel became immense, and its increase proceeded in the course of time in an unprecedented manner: but I apprehend that the spiritual seed is principally in view of the prophecy, those numbers of God's elect which have been

gathered together into his church through all ages, and of which the sum is continually swelling. I think it has respect to that "great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which stand, and will stand, before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." We may long to be of their happy number, we may indeed say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But, brethren, we never shall, except we possess a better foundation of hope than Balaam had. No, brethren, if our way be perverse before God as his was, our end will be like his. If we wish to curse the people of God, nay brethren, if we be not numbered among them, we can never participate in their blessings. If we let ourselves out to hire for filthy lucre of earth, we can never possess a treasure in heaven. We must live the life, if we would die the death of the righteous.

II. We now proceed to their second attempt. It seems surprising that after such

declarations as these, Balaam should still endeavour to seek after a curse, and still repeat his attempts to procure it. But he spake all these things merely as the organ of God. They were words which God put into his mouth and compelled him to utter, while he himself had no more individual concern in them than the ass would have had, if she had been the instrument used. If Balaam could have spoken according to his own wish, very different would have been the sentence upon them. Balak after having expostulated with him for blessing his enemies though he had sent for him to curse them, and having received for answer that he must "take heed to speak that which the Lord had put into his mouth," induces him to renew the attempt: and thinking perhaps that Balaam had been overpowered by the sight of so numerous a people when he looked upon their whole encampment, took him to another place, from whence he says, "Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them and shalt not see them all; and curse me them from thence." When they arrived there they again erected

seven altars, and offered on each a bullock and a ram. And now we are to hear the answer of the Lord, and to consider another prophecy which Balaam was compelled to deliver.

The Lord again “met Balaam, and put a word into his mouth,” and thus we read it. “He took up his parable and said, rise up, Balak and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor. God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt, he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God

wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion : he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain."

This prophecy opens with a declaration of the unchangeableness of God, shewing these men the folly of persevering in their attempt. God is in scripture said to repent, when he withholds his punishments on the repentance of man, or when he revokes the mercies which they have abused. But his purposes are irrevocable, and are not to be altered by others. What of mercy, or of judgment, he hath declared to any man or people, neither men nor devils can hinder, and the immutability of his nature and his word is the strong support upon which his people have ever trusted. My Christian brethren, every promise which God has made you, every blessing which he has pronounced upon you as the followers of his dear Son, is no more in the power of your enemies, earthly or unearthly, to alter, than it is to prevent the sun from setting at night, or rising on the morrow's

morning. On the other hand, O sinners, there is no arm of man that can deliver you from the final outpouring of the wrath of God upon your unrepented-of sins, and Satan would not deliver you if he could. He, who has tempted and led you into sin, has ever been seeking to bring destruction upon you, and will laugh with hellish joy and triumph if the last sentence of God condemn you to like misery with himself. The faithfulness of God to the word which he has spoken is the joy of his people, and the delight of his holy angels; the same faithfulness is the terror of his enemies, and the hope which hell entertains for the peopling of its dark and desolate regions.

The unwilling prophet says, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel?" What means this? We have read of much iniquity, and great perverseness in Israel. It means that God had pardoned their sin, and would not take deserved vengeance of their perverseness. It means what the prophet Jeremiah afterwards said, "In those days and at that time, saith

the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Yes, brethren, this is the thing which the Psalmist said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." And is this confirmed to us in the New Testament? Yes, beloved brethren in Christ, the New Testament is not wanting in any blessing of the Old. It is confirmed by the quotation of the passage just read to you. It is confirmed by the declaration that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses," and that "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The meaning of these words of Balaam as we may apply them to ourselves, is this, that the sins of truly penitent believers in Christ, though they be many and great, are so absolutely forgiven that it is as though they had not been committed: they are so cleansed

from them all by the blood of Christ, that the eye of God beholds no pollution : they are so clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that their sins are covered.

Balaam next describes the irresistible power and might which were with Israel in consequence of the presence of God among them, comparing it with that of the unicorn or rhinoceros, and the lion. He tells Balak that this would not only render them invincible by the surrounding nations, and make them conquerors over all who should oppose them ; but that they were also protected against all the power of enchantments and divinations ; and therefore even if Balak and he could call to their aid the mighty and malignant spirits of hell themselves, it would not avail. No, my Christian friends, “ the kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed,” “ the gates of hell” moreover may rage against him and his people, but they will all “ imagine a vain thing.” Their power will be broken, their arts frustrated, and their schemes scattered

in the dust. No weapons that are formed against them shall prosper, no machinations prevail. On them foul spirits shall have no power. Satan shall fall as lightning before them. "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," they need not fear "what man can do unto them," they may set at defiance all the principalities and powers of hell, and the rulers of wickedness in high places. In these their spiritual conflicts and victories it shall be said, as of Israel here, "What hath God wrought?" Oh! how wonderful to the believer himself is the power and grace by which God enables him to fight his good fight of faith, and to overcome his great enemy with all his emissaries and temptations. And when he hath swallowed up death in victory, when the believer reigns triumphant with God in glory, when from those seats of exalted honour and unspeakable blessedness he looks down upon the world which he has left, and remembers his own sinful nature there, and the dangers and temptations that beset him, and the wiliness used to entrap him, and the power exerted to destroy him,

and his own weakness, and the treachery of his heart, and thinks how he has been delivered from all, and brought through all to be where and what he is; oh! he will then exclaim, “what hath God wrought?” Eternity will be occupied by him in praising and blessing and glorifying the God who has dealt so wonderfully, mercifully, and graciously, with him, and wrought so powerfully for him and in him.

O my brethren, let me now say in application, what madness and folly will there be in our hearts if we like Balaam be induced by any considerations to run contrary to God, and to sin against knowledge? Thus did he. He knew better. He knew that he ought not to attempt to lift up a finger against Israel. But he was carried away by his love of gain. His desire of obtaining gold and honour drowned his convictions; it wrought secretly in his heart, and led him to the dreadful wickedness of which he here and afterwards became guilty. My dear friends, there are thousands in the world who know, as well as Balaam did, what they ought to do,

yet who act as he did, from the same motive, and sell their souls at the same price. The world, by the captivation of its wealth, honours, or pleasures, has slain its thousands and tens of thousands. Oh! shun the example and character of this awful man. Reverence your conscience; always obey the word of God; act in every thing as the light of truth shines in your mind; and remember that oft repeated question of our Lord, "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and yet lose his own soul?"

Desire to possess the blessedness of God's spiritual Israel. Even in this sermon you have seen enough to convince you that they are the blessed of the Lord. They are blessed in life with the love and grace of their God, blessed in their death by his presence and favour, and blessed, most of all, they will be, in the eternal world. This blessing, brethren, you may covet, and you cannot covet it too much. This desire God will prosper. You shall not be disappointed of it, as Balaam was of his reward. Its best part, that which relates to heaven, shall be fulfilled to you

beyond your highest conceptions. And O my friends, there is a promise even of earthly things attached to it, for Jesus has said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

SERMON VIII.

FURTHER PROPHECIES OF BALAAM.

NUMBERS XXIV. 5, 6.

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.

WE have already expounded two of those predictions of prosperity and power, with which Balaam, under the compulsory power of the Spirit of God, was made to bless the children of Israel, as they were lying encamped in the plains of Moab. I say the compulsory power of the Spirit of God; because it was in his heart to have done far otherwise. Such was in his case the spirit of prophecy.

It is not so in the gift of saving grace. The first operation of the Holy Ghost on the mind of man is to make him a willing subject of divine influence. It begins by removing his natural opposition to the will of God and the method of his salvation; it implants in him spiritual desires and holy purposes; it disposes him to approve of all the things which God has revealed and commanded, and infuses into him a love for the people of God, and a desire to do them good and to have his own portion among them. Thus instead of remaining under this influence an unwilling creature, all the while desiring otherwise, rebelling and doing despite to the Spirit, 'the grace of God by Christ prevents him that he may have a good will and works with him when he has that good will.' There is this most important difference between the mere gift of extraordinary powers, and the sanctifying communications of saving grace.

With these observations I proceed to consider the two remaining prophetic blessings which Balaam was compelled to pronounce upon the Israelites, as they are recorded in

this chapter. Perceiving from what had already passed that it was God's determined purpose to bless them, notwithstanding all his attempts to procure a contrary decision, he desisted from his enchantments, and seems as if he would have ceased from any further attempts against them. But he was overruled even in this particular. While he beheld them abiding in order in their tents, according to their tribes, the Spirit of God again came upon him, and constrained him to utter still more noble predictions.

This third prophecy opens with what appears to be a pompous description of his attainments in respect of prophetic visions. "Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said; he hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open." These are the words of our common translation, and if they are correct, they certainly display the vanity of Balaam, and the complacency with which he prided himself in his gifts. But I must observe to you that it is generally

understood that the passage should rather be read thus.—“ Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes were *that* hath said; he hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling, and his eyes were opened.” If this be the right translation, the words probably refer to his inability to see his angel of the Lord which stood in the way, while the ass saw him, and to his falling down when the ass fell, and then perceiving the divine messenger. Whichever way we read, the import of the prophecy is not affected by it, nor yet the character of Balaam. For, alas for him, while his eyes were opened, his heart was shut against the word of God. Glorious indeed were the views that were vouchsafed to him, and the revelations which were made to him; but he derived no advantage from them to himself. His knowledge did not profit him, because his heart was not right with God. And no discernment of divine things, however obtained, will be beneficial to any man, unless it be accompanied with a bowing of the will to all that God would

have him to say and do, and a delight and joy of heart in the things which God commands, and in the people whom he honours.

The prophecy being thus opened, Balaam delivers the whole of it in these words. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn; he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion and as a great lion; who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee and cursed is he that curseth thee." In most beautiful imagery is the present position of the Israelites described, and their future glories predicted. Their increase in population, their power, their

victories, their influence on those who might love or hate them, are all set forth by figures selected from the loveliest scenes in nature, or the swiftest and most powerful beasts of the forest. And well was the prophecy fulfilled to them. The rapid increase of the people and of their flocks and herds after they got possession of the promised land, the astonishing fertility of their country which long flowed to them as with milk and honey, the triumphs which they won over the devoted nations, the military glories of their early kings, their peaceful and quiet state in the reign of Solomon, resting like a great lion couching after his repast, but ready to spring upon whatever disturbed him in his lair, all these things were fulfilled to the children of Israel by the hand of their God upon them. And according to the blessing and curse upon others, as they should favour or hate them, which was originally pronounced upon Abraham, and confirmed to Jacob, the Jews were a protection and the cause of prosperity to all who formed alliances with them, and the destruction of all who

dared to rise up in arms against them. Nay I doubt not but that if the history of all nations could be accurately examined on this particular point, it would be found that the prediction has been fulfilled even in the times of their dispersion, and that those nations which have dealt kindly with them have been rewarded for it by providential mercies and blessings, and those which have persecuted them have been punished.

Balaam's views might not extend beyond the application of this prophecy to the children of Israel, but doubtless the Spirit of God took a wider range, and then looked upon the whole of the future Church of Christ, as it was spread forth before his eternal view in the long vista of futurity. To it let us now direct our thoughts. Let us contemplate the people of God as gathered together in the new dispensation, and look upon the privileges which it at present enjoys, and the blessings which are yet reserved for it. May I not look over this congregation, and may not you, in the power of the mind's imagination, look upon the various congregations

who are assembled together in their respective places of worship on this and other holy sabbaths ? and beholding them peacefully occupying their seats, and worshipping in their places, offering up the voice of prayer and praise, listening to the Lord's word, rejoicing in the ordinances of the gospel, and blessed with the presence of their God in their assemblies, may we not adopt the words of Balaam and say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel?" And if we could but see the various tribes of this spiritual Israel divesting themselves of their jealousies, and throwing away their dissensions, and all speaking the same things, and perfectly joined together in the same judgment, and keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, how much more applicable and appropriate would the exclamation be ! Yet even as things are, and as each community is united, or single congregation is assembled in the worship of the Lord and the enjoyment of the word and its ordinances, we may truly say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! Blessed are

they that dwell in thy house : they will be still praising thee." Oh when the love of God is shed abroad upon their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them, and all the divine influences of the Spirit are poured out upon them, under the means of grace, filling them with light, and life, and peace, and love, delighting them with joy and gladness, enriching them with holy affections and heavenly purposes, and reflected back again in their labours of love and works of righteousness, Oh then words can scarcely be found, even in the lovely imagery of the prophets themselves, to describe the happiness and glory of Christ's real church on earth. His presence and grace, his strength and power, are in the midst of them : highly indeed is their king exalted, higher than all the kings of the earth, for his throne is in their hearts, and his sceptre has a universal sway among all the various peoples, and nations, and languages who constitute that church. While great and rich as is this present state of the Spiritual Israel of God, far greater and richer will its future glories be ; for the prophecy is yet not

wholly fulfilled. A vast increase shall yet be made to it. The whole heathen shall be given to Christ in possession by grace, as they are for an inheritance by promise ; the Jews shall be recovered from their fall and he shall reign over them also ; the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, all his enemies shall be subdued unto him and great will be the abundance and peace of his children. And when that church is transplanted into heaven, and all its members are perfectly purified from earthly dross and sin, and their king appears in his beauty, and all are gathered together around his throne, or spread over the vast expanse to fulfil his high behests, when they rejoice eternally in his love, and are glorified with him in his glory, what shall I say ? where is language to be found which can describe, what “ eye hath not seen nor ear heard ? ” No vision of prophet or apostle has ever been able to give any adequate description of the blessedness of the Lord’s people in heaven, the greatness and glory of the kingdom which they shall then inherit, or

the king who shall rule over them. Even the beloved disciple could only say, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" and the great apostle of the Gentiles, who had been caught up into the third heavens, brought back no account of the visions which he saw, and the unspeakable words which he heard. Oh! brethren, desire earnestly to be members of Christ's true spiritual church on earth, and then you will hereafter enjoy all its glories in heaven.

I now go on to consider and expound to you the next and concluding prophecy of Balaam. Enraged by the grievous disappointment of his expectations Balak dismisses him with reproaches, and taunts him with the loss of the great things which he had intended to give him. "I called thee," he says, "to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." Most true indeed, the Lord had kept Balaam back from honour; and so he

will every one whose way is perverse before him. But *God* is not to be thus sent away at Balak's pleasure, and therefore he shall hear somewhat more of this people to his discomfort and dismay. Balaam again tells him that what the Lord said unto him that he must speak, and ere he parts from him proceeds to advertise him further what that people would do unto his people in the latter days.

He opens this prophecy in the same manner as the preceding, with the same description of his knowledge and visions, and I need not remark again on the difference between external gifts and internal graces, between knowledge in the head and love in the heart. But oh! if such gifts as these which Balaam possessed reside in an unsanctified soul, how awful is its case! and if such light as his be darkness, how great must that darkness be!

The prophecy is as follows. Thus Balaam speaks. "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre

shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies: and Israel shall do valiantly. But of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." The prophecy concludes with predictions of the fate of other nations, and looks forward not only to the destruction of the Amalekites and Midianites, but to the victories of the Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans, and the furthest end of time. I shall only take notice of those parts of it which refer more evidently and directly to the spiritual state of the church of Christ and its heavenly king.

The abrupt manner in which Balaam here speaks is worthy of observation. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh." Whom does he mean by this pronoun, *him*? No person had been previously spoken of, to whom it can be referred. No, for in the eager haste and rapid language of prophecy the Spirit hurries him on

to speak of Christ, the great Messiah, the glorious star and mighty sceptre. He is here spoken of as a new star arising in the firmament, appearing for the admiration of men, and to give light unto the world. Thus did an emblem of him shine forth, the star in the east, which guided the wise men to the place of his birth. Thus was he spoken of by Zacharias, "the tender mercy of God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Thus also the Lord speaks of himself in the vision vouchsafed to St. John in Patmos, "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." And St. Peter also speaks in a similar figure. He with two other favoured apostles, had seen the Lord transfigured before them. They had been eyewitnesses of somewhat of his essential majesty honour and glory; they had heard a voice from heaven in the holy mount: yet he tells them that they had a better medium of instruction and information than any which

could be derived from such visions as these. "We have also," he says, "a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." We then need not envy the visible display of glory which these apostles witnessed, nor the revelations given to St. Paul in the third heavens, nor the visions vouchsafed to St. John in the isle of Patmos, and least of all, the prophetic spirit which was possessed by Balaam, and Ahaz, and Saul, and others of a similar description. We have the word of God, "a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path;" and we have the blessed influence of his Spirit in our hearts, working there internally, to sanctify as well as to enlighten, to fill our souls with love as well as knowledge, to make us like him, and able to discern his glory.

He is also come out of Israel as "a sceptre," the emblem of regal authority and power. For Jesus is the King of Zion and the prince of peace. But his kingdom is not of this world. He received it not by any

earthly appointment. It is not an outward and visible kingdom, directing the common affairs of state. It has little to do with the petty politics of sublunary things. It is a kingdom established in men's hearts, a government of religious and pious influence, a system of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Its sceptre is swayed over the emotions of the soul, which it subjects to the rule of Jesus, "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

But what says Balaam of this glorious light and king? "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him but not nigh." This was true in one sense, for Balaam saw him through a period of fifteen hundred years which had still to run before his actual appearance. It was true in a far more important sense to himself personally, for he has yet to see him, and the day in which he shall come in his glory, to execute the final judgment upon him and upon all the workers of

iniquity. "Behold he cometh with clouds : and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." "Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ and he saw it and was glad," and though it was further off in point of time than when Balaam had this view of it, yet Abraham even then had Jesus *nigh* unto him, for he dwelt in his heart by faith, while Balaam had Jesus far off from him, for his heart was full of covetousness, and of evil designs and practises against his people.

Oh ! that we may be enabled to see the Lord Jesus by faith and after a spiritual manner. There is a view of him which the mind may take though he be not seen by the eye in visible form, nor in vision by the spirit. There is a looking unto Jesus which can purify, animate, strengthen, and comfort the soul. God give unto you, my brethren, such a view of Christ. And as you thus look upon him, may you become the willing subjects of his spiritual kingdom. Oh ! that you may also be *nigh* unto him, and he unto you,

and that you may feel all the power, happiness, and joy of his presence with you. Then what present privileges and blessings will be yours? Holy and heavenly peace, joy in the light of his countenance, instruction and guidance in his ways, protection from all adversities, victory over all enemies, with every other blessing that is promised in the gospel, or necessary for your comfort and salvation. And oh! what a view of Christ awaits his faithful people! when they enter with him into his heavenly kingdom, and see him as he is. If he be now precious to your hearts by faith, if he be one “whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Oh how blissful will be the sight of him, when you are admitted into his immediate presence, and behold him in the effulgence of his glory.

SERMON IX.

THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

NUMBERS xxv. 11—13.

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace : and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood ; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

WE have seen, in the preceding sermons, the fruitless attempts of Balak and Balaam to curse the people whom God had blessed. Their attempts had recoiled upon their own

heads. The disappointment of these two confederates was great, and they had mutual dissatisfaction with each other. Balak had obtained no aid against the people whom he feared, and Balaam had lost the wealth and honours which he desired. A more extraordinary and baser character than this latter can scarcely be conceived. Even after all that passed in his mind, the wishes he had had, and the hopes he had entertained, we might reasonably conclude, that when such an overruling influence had been upon him, when he had been so plainly shewn the intentions of God respecting the children of Israel, he would have gone to his home, and have humbled himself before God for his attempts to harm them, would have henceforth taken their part and joined himself to them. But money, accursed money, was still the object of his desire and aim, and if he could not obtain the rewards of Balak in one way, he would try to succeed in another, nor were the means which he afterwards took to procure it less infamous than those which were adopted by Judas Iscariot himself.

Balaam saw that the favour of God was with the Israelites, and knew that while they were possessed of it, they would be invincible. He perceived that the only way to prevail against them, was to cause them to forfeit that favour. If he could lead them to sin against the Lord, then they would be deserted by their strength, Balak would be able to overcome them, and he should obtain his reward. He therefore, with diabolical intention and cunning, put Balak and his people upon a plan for corrupting them.

I. I will shew you, first, their sin and its punishment.

The sin into which they were ensnared was this, as we read of it in the beginning of the chapter, “ Now Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself to Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” This was their sin: and we find, a little further on in the history, that the

Moabites were induced to ensnare the Israelites in this infamous manner by the counsel of Balaam ; and we find also that their wicked schemes, though they brought the wrath of God upon his own people, did also, in his righteous judgment, bring destruction upon themselves. We read in the thirty-first chapter of this book that when the Israelites had been recovered by Moses from this their declension, and had at his command made war upon all the Midianites, because they had thus beguiled them, and had signally defeated and conquered them, and when Moses, wroth with the officers and captains of Israel for having saved the women alive, had commanded them also to be put to death because they had been the great tempters to iniquity, he particularly ascribes the contrivance of this wicked temptation to the advice of Balaam. He says, in the sixteenth verse of that chapter, “ Behold, these caused the children, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor.” The book of Revelation also gives the same account of this matter, for there the

Lord, after partly commending the church in Pergamos for its constancy to him, yet adds, " But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there men that hold the doctrines of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." We thus clearly see the sin of this man, and the destruction which fell upon the people who adopted his counsel, and on those abandoned women who were the agents in carrying it into practice. But what became of the instigator? What was the end of Balaam? We have it in the eighth verse of this same thirty-first chapter, " They slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of the Midianites, Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." Such was the end of this wretched man, and well he deserved his fate. To tempt the Lord's people to sin, to seduce them to acts of fornication and idolatry, was the greatest of crimes, and shewed most diabolical malignity. Vain indeed was

such a man's exclamation, "let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his." His end was according to his life. He received the recompense of his iniquity. The wages of sin was death.

But now we will return to the history before us, where we read how the counsel of Balaam was acted upon and unhappily succeeded.—The people fell into the snare of the Midianitish women, and this led them to join in their idolatrous feasts, and to sacrifice to Baal. The worship of the false Gods of the Midianites was celebrated with luxurious banquets and most impure rites. These have been two of the leading characters of heathen worship in all ages; and if to them you add acts of most outrageous and revolting cruelty you have the principal features of the shameless and horrid superstition by which the world has endeavoured to propitiate and please its idol-deities. Feasting, impurity, and cruelty, have uniformly been the principal things observable in the false worship of nations both civilized and savage. Nor was there any thing in the rites by which Baal, or Chemosh,

or Ashtaroth, were served of old, which has not formed its counterpart in the idolatrous practices of the heathen of the present age. The making of children to pass through the fire to Moloch has been rivalled by the infanticide, the burning of widows, and the death of aged parents, which our own cotemporaries have seen, nor was there any impurity in the feasts in honour of these ancient idols, which has not been followed with equal steps in the disgusting scenes of Juggernaut.

Pause here and reflect what are our own chief enemies. The curse of Balaam could not hurt the people of Israel; but their own lusts destroyed them. So we have always more cause for fear from the enemy within, than from those that are without, from our own corruptions than the malice of Satan. Let those who desire the favour of God, and especially let all young people, behold in what their greatest danger of incurring his wrath consists, and what they should fear more than the incantations of magicians, or the power of the evil spirits of hell, namely, their own sinful desires and passions, and

seductive tempters of their own kind. The sensual indulgencies of high feeding and drinking, of fornication and adultery, have cast down their thousands and tens of thousands. These are the crying sins of our own times, of our own professed Christians. In these respects there are Balaams in numbers, there are Moabitish women in crouds, and there are multitudes who “go after them straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.” Oh! that a warning voice might reach the ears and hearts of all who now hear me, to admonish and deter them from all such evil ways.

2. But has the Lord no anger with even his own people when they offend and sin against him? has he no punishments for them also? Assuredly he has; and they shall always be made to feel that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from him, and that he will by no means clear the guilty, be they who they may. Hear and tremble, ye who

profess yourselves the servants of the Lord, as ye learn what he did to Israel, the people upon whom ye have lately heard so many blessings pronounced, when they gave themselves up to the lusts of the flesh, and the practices of idolatry. A plague was sent among them for their punishment, and Moses was also directed to issue his command to the judges of Israel to slay the men that had joined themselves to Baal-peor, and to hang up their heads before the Lord. And now what a scene of misery had they brought upon themselves. Think of the pestilence stalking through their ranks, and the judges, and others, by their orders, setting upon the chief offenders, though their own friends and relations, so that no less a number than twenty-four thousand fell at that time. Surely the Lord hates iniquity, even though it is committed by his own people, and will not fail to punish it with great severity. And surely we should hearken to the admonition of the Apostle, "neither let us commit fornication, as some of them also committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand."

St. Paul gives here, as we conclude, the number of those who died, directly by the plague, while a thousand more were slain by the hand of the judges.

In the midst of this wickedness of many there was one most barefaced insult committed. Zimri, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites, brought his paramour, a woman of equal rank with himself, for she was the daughter of one of the chief houses in Midian, into the tent, “in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” How impudent was this man in his wickedness, not even attempting to conceal it, but proclaiming it as Sodom. (Oh! that those among ourselves, for such there are, who boast of their iniquities, and glory in their shame, might fear, if they will not blush for their open, nay also for their secret sins, for these are ever seen by the eye of God and abhorred, though the former both insult his Majesty, and shock the hearts of the good and holy.) His rank and power however did

not protect the man. Phinehas, the eldest son of Eleazar, the eldest son of Aaron the priest, was filled with a holy zeal for God, and in execution of the command given by Moses, ran upon them, and thrust both of them through with a spear, for which, as we have seen, he had the full authority of God and his lawgiver, and acted under the command of the chief magistrate who is not to bear the sword in vain. It was a just punishment of these sinners. But oh! what a state was it in which they died! Oh! if such a sudden death should come upon you, under any like circumstances, what would become of your souls? whither would they be sent? What would be your eternal state for all eternity? Oh! think of this and desist from *all* iniquity.

II. I come now to consider the testimony of the Lord's approbation, and his reward of Phinehas for this act, as it is recorded in the verses which I read in the text, and which will form the second part of this exposition.

The Lord said, " Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of

Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them," "he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel." This shews that he acted in a public capacity, as one of the appointed executioners of the divine vengeance, and that he was himself actuated by a right motive, the holy feeling of indignation for the insulted honour of God, and the gross transgression of the sinner. He appeared as openly on the Lord's side, as the other had openly sinned against him. As a public character invested with due authority, he cut off a public scandal. By the divine command he executed wrath upon him that had done evil. He was therefore not only justified in his deed, but approved for it. It had the effect of an atonement for the people; it turned away the wrath of God from them that he consumed them not in his jealousy, and made him at one with them again. His own holy zeal, and this sacrifice of the wicked to the justice of God, appeased his wrath, and the "plague was stayed from the people of Israel."

And God not only honoured him with this testimony of approbation, but he also gave him a distinguished reward. He says, "Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace; and he shall have it and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." He was, it is true, the regular successor to it by birth, but the office had not been restricted as a birthright. God might have passed over his father or himself, and bestowed it on a younger branch, but he now settled it upon Phinehas for this distinguished act of zeal, and it continued in his line, with only some short interruption, as we have noticed in a previous sermon, until the time of the complete disarrangement and destruction of all the Jewish polity under the power of the Romans. But besides this settlement of the priesthood upon him, there was also contained, no doubt, the gift of personal and individual blessings. The covenant of peace was made in his soul, as well as given to him for his outward honour, and the love of God and his favour and friendship were bestowed upon him and remained with him

while he lived, and will be eternally enjoyed by him, as a king and a priest, in the everlasting glory of heaven.

But our thoughts are led to another vindicator of God's honour, another atonement, and another covenant of peace. Consider, brethren, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh ! what a zeal was there in his heart for the restoration of the insulted majesty of God. Think how the whole race of man had revolted from God, what a universal defection had taken place, and the world was lying in wickedness, God's law broken, and his service rejected. But Jesus came not as an avenger, he brought not the sword in his hand, nor the pestilence in his breath; he came "not to destroy men's lives but to save them," not to kill but to make alive. He came to restore the honour of God's broken law, not by visiting the transgressor with death, but by fulfilling it on his behalf: he brightened again the glory of God, not by destroying those who had tarnished it, but by fulfilling his whole will and doing his whole pleasure. Oh what a union of

illustrious zeal for the honour of his heavenly father, and of surpassing mercy towards the sinners who had forsaken his service, was exhibited by the Son of God, when he came forth to vindicate the majesty of God among his rebellious creatures, and to recover them to their obedience.

And think again of the means by which *he* made an atonement. He shed not the blood nor otherwise took away the lives of twenty-four thousand sinners as a sacrifice to God's justice, but he poured out the blood of one pure and spotless victim, no participator in the universal sin ; he offered up one life in atoning sacrifice ; his own blood his own life effected that mighty atonement, paid the whole ransom. In that stupendous act of judgment and mercy which filled all heaven with wonder and earth with praise, God spared the sinners, but he " spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Jesus came, not as from Bozrah, with garments died in the blood of his enemies ; the blood which stained him flowed from his own side, trickled down his face from the crown

of thorns, or burst in large drops from the pores of his body. There, Christians, behold the atonement which was made for you. There, in the sufferings of Jesus, see the method taken for procuring the pardon of your sins, and feel the strongest motive to make you forsake them. Look at that bleeding Lamb of God as he hangs upon his cross, suffering the wrath of divine justice in expiatory sacrifice.

And then go and sacrifice your own sins, and crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Flee from the allurements of all wicked tempters. And let neither men nor women, your own evil desires, nor the arts of Satan himself, prevail to make you expose yourselves to the vengeance of Almighty God, that you perish not eternally.

Jesus also, like Phinehas, received honour and reward. As Mediator an everlasting priesthood was given him, and the covenant of peace ratified to him. He exercises that priesthood for the good of his believing people, and secures them the blessings of that covenant. Let these receive to themselves the comfort

of the word spoken by Isaiah, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Oh! let it be your support and consolation in this world of trial and trouble, ye children of God and followers of Jesus, that the covenant of peace and of the everlasting priesthood is made with you in Christ, and rejoice in it, as David was enabled to do in the close of an anxious and much chequered life. "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow."

But ye who reject this covenant, and enter not into it by faith, ye who live ungodly lives, in the vanities of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and works of sin, know that a day will come when heavier judgment will fall upon you than fell upon either the Midianites or these sinners in Israel. A day is yet to come even on earth when "multitudes, multitudes

in the valley of decision," shall be slain. Such a day of the Lord's vengeance shall come, when he shall gather together the nations of his enemies and their kings to battle, and Jesus, clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, shall appear against them, with the armies of heaven, and shall tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. But another day, still more remote, and far more terrible, shall come, when the wicked shall all be driven away into everlasting perdition, and cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. O sinners, forsake your sins, seek the mercy of God in Christ, flee to his atonement, take hold of his covenant. So shall you have peace and not destruction.

SERMON X.

THE JEWISH SACRIFICES.

NUMBERS XXVIII. 2.

Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, my offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.

IN the beginning of the book of Leviticus we considered several offerings of individuals, as appointed atonements for their sins, or freewill-offerings of gratitude for mercies received; such as the peace-offerings, the trespass-offerings, and others. Here we are presented with an account of the regular sacrifices of the whole congregation, the public and national service; and I have omitted the consideration of them until now, because this portion of the Holy Scriptures gives the most detailed and orderly account

of them altogether. They had been instituted before, and had been observed in the wilderness, but they are here enumerated in regular order, and this chapter, with the following one, presents us with a view of the congregational service of the Israelites in their daily burnt-offerings morning and evening, and in their offerings on the sabbath, and on the new moons, and on their appointed solemn festivals. These were offerings which God was pleased to require under the Mosaic dispensation, and which continued to be observed, with more or less punctuality as the people kept or deserted their allegiance to the Lord, until an end was put to the political existence of the Jews as a nation by the Roman conquest, and to the ceremonial observances of their law by the gospel of Jesus.

I. I will give you, first, an account of their *daily sacrifice*. Two lambs were offered every day, the one in the morning, and the other in the evening. These were lambs of a year old, and without spot or blemish, the best and most perfect of their flocks. Each was burnt upon the altar, as a continual

burnt-offering, and along with each a meat-offering was also presented, consisting, in our measure, of about three quarts of the finest flour, mixed with rather more than a quart of the purest oil. A drink-offering likewise accompanied each, consisting of somewhat more than a quart of the richest and strongest wine, which was to be poured on the lamb and the mingled flour and oil as they were burning on the altar. These offerings, provided at the public cost, were presented to the Lord twice on every day. They were never to be omitted. Whatever other offerings were ordered for the sabbath or other peculiar days and seasons, or were brought by any of the people in their individual capacity at their own charges, these were not to supersede the daily morning and evening sacrifice, but to be presented in addition to them.

- Here we may inquire, what did this teach the Jews? Evidently it taught them, in the first place, that God required of them a daily service. They were thus, through their priests and offerings, to present themselves

every day before the Lord. If God required this daily service of them as a nation, every pious individual among them would feel that in like manner he required their separate and personal worship. It appears from the gospel of St. Luke that numbers of the people were wont to assemble themselves about the temple as the services were performing within it, for the purposes of prayer and praise. Surely every individual Jew was thus taught that it was his duty to offer to the Lord a solemn stated personal worship every day.

2. They were clearly taught, in the second place, their need of a daily sacrifice for sin. They fully understood that these offerings were expiatory, and as they were required every day, they would perceive that they themselves were every day guilty of sin, and continually needed an atonement. They were thus instructed in the great fundamental doctrine of salvation. Though they were not so fully acquainted with it as we are, yet they might discern the principles, and feel the suitable emotions of soul. They might gather from these types and shadows something of

the views which a sinner should ever have of himself, and of the means by which he shall be accepted of God.

3. They were taught, in the third place, the duty and privilege of a daily communion with God. The institution of this daily sacrifice is recorded in the twenty-ninth chapter of Exodus, and there we read, "This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle before the Lord; where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee." Here one great purpose and benefit of public worship is plainly expressed, which was afterwards so explicitly stated by our Lord, "Where two or three are met together in my name there am I in the midst of them." Their meat-offering and drink-offering with the lamb seems to have intimated to them that when they came to God on an atoning sacrifice, he would graciously accept them, and be on terms of friendly intercourse. Such were some of the important truths which the Israelites were taught by their daily morning and evening sacrifice.

II. The scripture proceeds to inform us, secondly, of the offerings required *on the sabbath*. The seventh day as we saw in a former sermon, was blessed and sanctified by God, when he ceased from his six days operations, as a memorial of his resting from all the work which God created and made. He had declared the observance of it to be a great moral duty of man by placing it in the decalogue. He had provided by miracles that its rest should not be broken in the wilderness. And here he clothes that sacred day with further distinction of honour. On its weekly return the morning and evening sacrifices were to be doubled. Two more lambs with the same quantity of flour and oil and wine to each, were to be offered in addition to those of each ordinary day, and thus the Lord again magnified his holy sabbath.

Now this taught the Jews that the sabbath was more than a day of rest. They were shewn that their religious duties were increased on that day, and that it was a season of more than common service and worship. As the appointment of its rest gave them leisure,

so this law of their offerings upon it taught them to be more earnest in the whole of their devotions. They hereby might see into the spiritual nature of this sacred day, and be led to employ themselves upon it in holy exercises of praise and prayer. From this increase of their national offerings on the sabbath, the pious among them would doubtless learn that the offerings of the heart also from themselves and their families should be larger and more earnest on that day than on any other of the week.

III. Proceeding with the chapter we find, thirdly, the appointment for the offerings *on the new moons*. This was a period of time when the idolatrous heathen nations were accustomed to worship the host of heaven, and the Israelites were directed to offer peculiar worship at that time to him who made the heavens, with all that decorate them and all that move and dwell therein. A burnt-offering of a more costly kind was then to be presented. Two young bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs, with flour and oil and wine for the meat-offering and drink-offering in

proportion to the size of each animal, and moreover a kid of the goats for a sin-offering, all in addition to the daily sacrifices, were required whenever the moon began again to renew her monthly course. These were to be “a burnt-offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord.”

This appointment would excite a more serious remembrance of the one living and true God among the children of Israel, and produce a greater separation from the heathen. While their idolatrous neighbours were worshipping the creatures, they would be worshipping the glorious Creator. They would think of him as the great governor, as well as Creator, of all things about them, above and below them. They would recognize his providence, and ascribe all the vicissitudes of the atmosphere to his hand. They would see his goodness in the dews of heaven and the fertility of the earth, in “the precious things brought forth by the sun, and in the precious things put forth by the moon.” Day and night, winter and summer, sun and moon, rain and sunshine, might all

be brought before their devout acknowledgment, as things which were appointed and ordered by him, whenever they thus presented their monthly offerings. No influences of the heavenly bodies would be regarded as giving them any vitality, or constituting them objects of divine honours. They would look upon them all as formed by Jehovah and wholly under his sway. Every pious heart among them might on each new moon find cause to say, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

IV. I now bring again before you, fourthly, the offerings and solemnities which were required of the Israelites *on their appointed feast days*. There were many great festivals to be kept by them, in general commemorative of some especial mercies: as these have been previously considered, I shall here take but brief notice of them. The account of them begins at the sixteenth verse of this chapter, with directions for the offerings

which were to be made in the week of the feast of the Passover. We saw the institution of that festival in the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus, on that night in which the Lord passed over the houses of the children of Israel, while he destroyed the first-born in every house of the Egyptians, a night to be much remembered unto the Lord by an ordinance throughout all their generations. On the annual return of that night *every family* was to kill and eat the Passover Lamb *by itself*, but here the offerings are to be made *publicly* by the *nation* at the tabernacle and afterwards at the temple, during the week of the days of unleavened bread, which were to be the same on each of the seven days as the offerings made on the day of the new moon. At the twenty-sixth verse, we find the offerings prescribed for the feast of the first fruits of wheat-harvest. On that day similar offerings were also to be presented.—In the beginning of the next chapter we find Moses entering on an account of the offerings and other ceremonies of the seventh month of their year. More feasts were held in this

month than in any of the others, perhaps in allusion to the greater sanctity of the hallowed seventh day, the holy sabbath; and perhaps also because there was the interval between the harvest and the seed time, when they could rest from labour with less inconvenience. The first day of that month was the feast of trumpets. The offerings upon it were one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish, with a meat-offering and a drink-offering proportioned to the size of each, and also one kid of the goats, to make an atonement for them. On the tenth day was the Day of Atonement. We saw the institution of this very impressive and solemn ceremony when we expounded the sixteenth chapter of the book of Leviticus. On that day various sacrifices were to be offered peculiar to itself, and the remarkable ceremony respecting the scape-goat to be observed, and besides these, the same offerings as on the first day of the month were also to be made. Then on the fifteenth day of that month, on which the feast of tabernacles commenced, more numerous and

costly sacrifices began to be presented. As I noticed these, when I expounded the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, I need not here give any particular account of them. But, in connection with the subject of this sermon, let it be observed that on all these particular festivals, besides the offerings peculiar to them, the Israelites were still to keep up the daily sacrifices, and the usual monthly ones. These were never to be omitted, but presented with constant uninterrupted regularity, notwithstanding the additional offerings required on the special occasions. It has been calculated that the number of animals offered, as *national* sacrifices, during the year, amounted to one thousand one hundred and one lambs, one hundred and thirty-two bullocks, seventy-two rams, twenty-one kids, and two goats. These were annually offered at the public cost, besides a vast number presented by persons in their private capacity, as sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, freewill-offerings, and in fulfilment of vows, which swelled the whole to a much greater amount.

I now proceed to an application of these services of the Jewish church. They have all been abrogated, together with the other parts of the ceremonial law, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whose sacrifice and redemption they were typical, and by the introduction of that new and better covenant, of which he is the great priest and head, and of that more spiritual worship and law which he has introduced. But as we enquired in the preceding parts of this sermon what these ceremonial observancies taught the Jews, let us now in conclusion endeavour to gather what we ourselves may learn from the consideration of them under the gospel.

1. We may learn, in the first place, that God requires service from us. If he has ceased to demand these offerings of our flocks and herds, he has not therefore given up his claims upon us. He looks for a spiritual service. He expects the devotion of our hearts and lives. This is powerfully expressed by St. Paul in the epistle to the Romans, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of

God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." The great mercy of redemption by the death of Christ, so clearly made known to us, has laid us under this obligation by the strongest of all claims. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are his." And besides this spiritual devotion of ourselves to the service of God, we are also called on as much as ever to honour God with our substance, for the support of his worship, and the maintenance and extension of his gospel, though the manner and quantity of our offerings are not prescribed, but each Christian is left to the prompting of his own piety and charity.

2. We may learn, in the second place, our own need of a continual sacrifice for sin. This is as indispensable as ever; and the sacrifices of slain beasts was only set aside by the offering up of that perfect atonement in the person of the Lord Jesus, to which they all looked, and by which they were perfected.

But we are as corrupt as were the Jews. We commit daily sins as well as they. We have to look daily to the sacrifice of the cross of Christ. It has been offered once for all ; but it is not to be only once regarded. It is to be brought by us by faith every day and every hour of the day as the propitiation for our daily offences. This we should bring always before God as our continual offering to obtain pardon and peace. O my beloved brethren, how anxious am I, even though by repetition again and again, to impress this great fundamental truth of all scripture, that there is no hope of pardon, peace, or heaven, for any one sinner of mankind, except as that sinner receives into his heart by faith the saving doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. There is no truth that calls for more urgency, none which more requires line upon line, for alas there is none which the carnal heart of man in reality withstands so tenaciously.

3. We may learn, in the third place, the propriety of daily and public worship. Surely we also, twice in every day, should assemble

our families together for prayer and praise. Let these be our morning and evening offerings. These will be for as sweet a savour unto the Lord, as were the morning and evening lamb. And surely on his sabbaths we should offer unto him a yet larger portion of spiritual worship. That whole day should be his from the morning's dawn to the evening's close, and should be occupied in those great spiritual duties, the public worship of our God and the advancement of our own souls in holiness, for which the sabbath was given as a day of rest to man. And on other sacred festivals of the Christian church, though they be but appointments of man, we may learn to cease from our labours, to keep them as sabbaths, and to employ ourselves upon them in the sacred services of the house of God, for this too will be for his glory and our own present and eternal good.

4. We may profitably notice, in the fourth place, some general similarity in our own worship and that of the Jews. We have a daily service. Our church has appointed one for the use of her members, and if it be not

observed, better would it be if it were, at least the daily worship in our families should be substituted instead of it. We also have our holy sabbaths, on which we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but join in united service, and in a public testimony of our regard to our God and his day. Oh! let us make them days both of rest and of holy convocation. We have our monthly sacraments, when we meet to receive the memorials of our blessed Saviour's dying love and sacrifice, to remember him with feelings of affection, love, and devotion, and to partake of the signs and seals of his covenanted mercy. Finally we have some great festivals, commemorative of the most interesting parts in our divine Lord's life and death, which we celebrate with special services and proper prayers. God grant that we may use all to his glory, and improve all to our own increase in faith and holiness.

SERMON XI.

THE EXCISION OF THE CANAANITES.

NUMBERS XXXIII. 50—53.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places : and ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein : for I have given you the land to possess it.

THE Almighty God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his posterity ; and he brought the Israelites out of Egypt in order that he might settle them in

it. That particular spot was selected to be the chosen scene on which God would display his glory, and the centre from which his true religion should send forth its rays. Every species of idolatry was to be utterly banished out of it, that it might be a holy land, and its inhabitants a peculiar people, the worshippers and servants of him alone.

But it was inhabited by a numerous and warlike people. How was it to come into the possession of the Israelites, comparatively few, little accustomed to war, and with small resources? Were they to settle among them, to enter into alliances with them, and thus become in time more numerous and prosperous than the original proprietors, and give them their name, their laws, and their religion? Or were these to migrate to some other country, as was not unfrequent, and leave them a quiet possession of the land? Neither of these methods were adopted by God. The Israelites were strictly commanded to exterminate them utterly: they were to conquer them in war; and not only were they to destroy every vestige of idolatry,

their pictures, their molten images, their high places, but they were also to kill or enslave the whole of the inhabitants themselves.

Now this has sometimes been used as an argument against the divine truth of the Mosaic records. It has been assumed that such a proceeding on the part of any nation is contrary to the nature of God, and that his benevolence and mercy are such that he would never issue commands so cruel. Such infidels as allow the facts of the history to be true say that this is to be attributed to the ambition and ferocity of Moses and his people, and charge them with a course of gross injustice and cruelty. They therefore argue that they were not under the direction of heaven, that they did not act by divine commission, and that they were neither more nor less than earthly invaders and marauders, actuated by their own passions, and successful by their own violence; that consequently Moses has given a false account, and all the miracles which he records in testimony of his divine authority, were altogether feigned, or were natural occurrences and circumstances

of which he artfully availed himself to delude and govern a credulous and superstitious people. This argument and charge we will now consider, and endeavour at once to vindicate the way of God and the truth of Moses.

I. Let us, in the first place, consider the manner in which the Israelites were commanded to treat the inhabitants of Canaan. We find a particular account of this given in the twentieth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy and the tenth verse, “When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee an answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war with thee, then thou shalt besiege it: and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thy hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and

thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth : but thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites ; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee." There are two opinions entertained by commentators from this and other passages ; the one, that peace was to be offered only to those nations which were far off, and not to any of the seven nations specified, that these latter were at once to be attacked, and utterly destroyed. The other is, that peace was at first to be proposed to all, even to the cities of the seven nations, and if they consented to emigrate, or to renounce their idolatries and become tributary to the Israelites, their lives were to be spared, and that the only difference made between them and the more distant nations

was in the case of their making opposition by war, in that case, the males only of the nations more remote were to be slain, but of the seven nations, all men, women, and children were to be utterly destroyed, and nothing left alive. Whether of these opinions is correct is not of much importance, since in fact none of the cities, of these nations, but one, did make peace with them as we read in the book of Joshua, the eleventh chapter and eighteenth verse, "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them as the Lord commanded Moses." Hence throughout the whole land there was a general extinction of the former inhabitants, and where that was not entire, it was through the non-fulfilment by the Israelites of the commands which they had received.

II. This treatment of the Canaanites was doubtless a severe one. We therefore enquire, in the second place, why it was appointed. What is the reason assigned for it in the sacred writings? The cause was that which, sooner or later, ever brings the judgment of God, in one form or other, upon nations and individuals. Incorrigible idolatry and abominable wickedness were found among them. This appears from the whole history, and so we read in Deuteronomy, the twelfth chapter and thirty-first verse, "Every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burned in the fire to their gods." With these unnatural cruelties of their superstition the most debasing and disgusting immoralities and indecencies were also connected, as we read in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. There, after charging the Israelites to abstain from various enormities and pollutions which these nations habitually committed, the Lord says in the twenty-fourth verse, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the

nations are defiled which I cast out before you: and the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants." And then the very same punishment which was about to be inflicted on these people was threatened to the Israelites themselves, if they should fall into the same abominations. So that God is no respecter of persons, and verily they also, in after ages, were vomited out by the same land, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity by crucifying the Lord of glory. Again and again the Scripture assigns the incorrigible impiety and wickedness of these nations as the reason why God was thus severe upon them. Lest the Jews should ascribe their possession of the land to their own goodness and deserts he tells them in the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy and fourth verse, "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out before thee, saying, for my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations.

the Lord doth drive them out from before thee."

III. Easily therefore may we, in the third place, vindicate the dealing of God with these nations. Here is nothing in fact contrary to the warnings and threatenings of his word. or the usual procedure of his providence. When a nation is sunk in impiety and sin, he arises in his wrath and takes vengeance upon it. For this cause he once destroyed the whole world with the flood. For this he rained fire and brimstone from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And often has he visited the iniquities of sinful nations by the sword of an invading conqueror, and blotted out their name from among the inhabitants of earth. His extinction of the Canaanites is therefore but analogous to many other instances of his just indignation against sin.

But it has been objected that in this case there was an excess of severity, inasmuch as that all, even unoffending infants and unarmed women were put to death, and attempts have been made, by exciting the feeling of compassion, to create a horror of the deed,

and lead us to conceive it contrary to the nature of God to approve or command it. But it is an evident fact that the same thing occurs in all national and general judgments. So it was at the deluge ; so it was with the cities of the plain ; so with the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ; so in the siege of Jerusalem ; so in many similar sackings of cities. Thus it also occurs in the convulsions of nature and the rage of its elements. The earthquakes, the lightning, the storm at sea, the famine, the pestilence, know no distinctions of age or sex. Nay even in the common course of human life we often see children suffering in consequence of the vices of their parents, and suffering so dreadfully as to make us ready to say, at least so far as this world is concerned, it had been good for them if they had never been born, or if they had died in their infancy. In all these respects the judgments of God are a great deep into which the powers of the human mind can let down no fathom-line ; and it is even the highest presumption in us to say, What doest thou ? Hence there can be no impeachment

of the divine truth and authority of the writer who records the fact that God dealt in the manner related with the seven idolatrous and wicked nations through the instrumentality of another nation, when the inspiration of that writer is proved by such irrefragable arguments as that of Moses.

IV. We may also, in the fourth place, as easily justify the conduct of the Israelites and their lawgiver and leader. Accusations have been flippantly brought against them of a brutal ferocity and thirst for blood. These necessarily fall to the ground when we consider that they were under the express command of Jehovah to act thus. No more blame attaches to them than to the judge who pronounces the sentence of death on an offender against the laws, or to the sheriff who executes it by his officers. No more blame attaches to the Israelites than to the angel who in one night cut off a hundred and forty-five thousand Assyrians in the army of Sennacherib. Not blame but honour arose to Phinehas when he slew his Idolatrous and licentious countryman. The Israelites had

an express commission for this utter excision of these nations. They were the executioners of the justice of God upon those on whom his sentence was already passed. They were not sent as judges to try and condemn. They had no discretionary permission to spare.—The final sentence had been past in the highest court of heaven, and they were sent to put it in force. Obedience was their duty, and disobedience their sin.

V. But again, I may observe, in the fifth place, that this severity to the Canaanites was not only a just punishment to them, but a merciful dispensation to others. The Jews were to possess the knowledge, and maintain the worship of one God; and were to manifest that otherwise unknown truth, the Unity of God, to the surrounding nations. One leading object of this severity therefore was to prevent the Israelites from apostacy, by sinking into the manners of the nations, by whom the land was already defiled; and to this he knew that their hearts were habitually prone. Hence the previous possessors were to be exterminated that they might not

corrupt the new comers. We have already seen in what danger they were of thus falling. Even while they were but on the borders of the land, the Midianitish women had beguiled them with their wiles, and seduced them to the worship of Baal-peor. That they might be kept pure, and that occasions of temptation might be cut off, was therefore one object to be effected by the excision of the tempters. They were positively commanded to destroy these seven nations, and to save alive nothing that breathed, for this important reason, "That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods." They were frequently warned, that if they suffered these people to remain, they would become snares and traps to them, and thorns in their sides and pricks in their eyes, and perpetually leading them into idolatry, would bring them into perpetual troubles. And further, the destruction of these idolaters and sinners by the Jews themselves, rather than by any direct judgment from the hand of God, would tend to impress upon their minds, selected as they were for such high

purposes, a greater detestation and dread of idolatry, preserve in them a more stedfast adherence to the true worship of God, and render them a brighter example to future ages and succeeding nations.

Thus we see that one objection, on which infidels have laid much stress, against the truth of the writings of Moses, and of his inspired character, falls to the ground. Here is nothing in the destruction of the seven nations of Canaan but what is accordant with the divine character, the threatenings of his word, and the procedure of his providence. All other objections, when accurately examined, will be found to be equally futile, and the divine inspiration, and consequent authority of the whole of the Holy Scriptures, will be placed upon a firmer foundation, the more they are attacked that they may be overthrown. May the good Spirit of God enlighten our minds that we may discern their importance and excellency, and may he confirm, strengthen, settle and establish us in a full belief that all these holy men of God “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

And oh ! that he may give us grace to be obedient to them in all things, and to do whatever the Lord therein commands us to do in all circumstances of life. Convinced without doubting of the divine authority of these sacred writings, may we implicitly follow all their directions, and give to them that entire subjection of mind heart and life which they so well deserve.

And oh ! that from this part of the history we may also learn more of the evil of sin. It is nothing but this that provokes the indignation of the Lord, and calls forth his judgments. It is nothing but this that desolates countries and destroys souls. Yet how careless are men and how secure they think themselves, even though they are living in sin, and serving the God of this world ! *Gross idolatry* would be a kind of monster under the revelation of the gospel ; but the idolatrous attachment of the heart to pleasure or wealth prevails but too generally. The judgments of the Lord may not be often visibly abroad in the earth, but his wrath against sin, and his future punishment of it,

are both plainly revealed in his word. Men are spared long in their transgressions, not that they may continue in them, but that they may repent of them and forsake them. Deeply concerned in this matter are all you who hear me. For the word of God did not more clearly declare the extermination of these wicked and idolatrous nations, than it pronounces the doom of everlasting destruction upon all who live ungodly: and the power of God did not more entirely fulfil those declarations upon *them*, than it will execute the threatenings of his word upon every impenitent sinner. Oh! that you were all wise, and would seriously consider these things.

There are calls to repentance, and there is yet time for it. Before the sentence of destruction is executed, mercy is offered to one and all of you. We, the ministers of the gospel, are sent to you "preaching peace by Jesus Christ." But like the cities of old, before which the armies of Israel under Joshua appeared, you must be willing to receive this peace. You must open the gates of your

hearts for the willing admission of Jesus, the captain of our salvation. All your idolatries and sins must be cast away from you, and you must become one with him and with his people. You must be the captives of his bow and sword, of his bow which fixes the arrow of conviction in the heart, and of the sword of his Spirit, which “ pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit.” You must take his yoke upon you ; and be it known to you, that his yoke is easy and his burden light. Yes, my brethren, if you would have peace with God, you must submit yourselves to his Son, whom he sends with proposals of mercy and reconciliation. Embrace these proposals. Renounce altogether the service of the God of this world, and become the faithful subjects of Christ’s spiritual kingdom. Conversion from the false gods of the heathen was required of the cities to whom Joshua offered peace : conversion from sin must be found in you. They were to join themselves to the cause and people of God, and so must you. Then you will escape destruction ; you will partake of all their

privileges ; you will share their victories ; and enter with them at last into their everlasting glory.

It is a mercy, my Christian brethren, that we have no such commission as that which was given to the Israelites. Our blessed master and leader came “ not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them :” and we are not to make use of fire and sword to exterminate sinners, but we are to beseech them to be reconciled to God. We are to use every means of instruction and persuasion which we can devise, and even where we do not succeed, we are to pity and pray, and continue to beseech and implore. We must indeed warn and admonish ; we must make known the Lord’s threatenings. But our happiest theme is to tell of mercy, to proclaim pardon and peace to the penitent, to set forth the grace of him who receiveth sinners, and is not willing that any should perish. Oh ! join with us in prayer that our message of peace may be gladly received, and numbers be converted and live.

SERMON XII.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

NUMBERS xxxv. 11, 12.

Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you ; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities of refuge from the avenger ; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

IN pursuing the history of the Jews, contemplating the characters and offices of individuals, or explaining their laws, we must ever bear in mind, that the whole had respect to another and better dispensation. All were preparatory to the introduction of the gospel. Judaism was the infancy, of which Christianity is the manhood ; the former the beginning, the latter the completion of God's revelation

respecting the redemption of his fallen creatures. Many persons, offices, events, and circumstances, were directly typical of more spiritual things which were afterwards brought to light, which at that time they served to intimate, and which now they illustrate. The appointment of the cities of refuge was of this description. It was a merciful institution for that state of the people of God ; but it had a further intention, and is a striking representation of God's mercy to sinners in Christ. We will endeavour to consider it in the two following particulars.

I. As a merciful appointment for the Jews.

II. As a typical representation of God's mercy in Christ.

To understand this appointment as one of mercy we must enter into a consideration of the law of murder. The original enactment, a most just and necessary one, was that death should be inflicted upon him who had caused the death of his fellow-man. " Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," and the main reason for this was at

the same time assigned, “for in the image of God made he man.” This is far the greatest of all crimes that can be committed against a fellow-creature, for it is one that can never be repaired. The murderer can never again restore the life which he has taken, as the thief might do with the property which he has stolen. And it not only removes the victim from all his present enjoyments and prospects of earthly good, but it cuts him off from any further use of the day of grace and salvation, and sends him to the judgment of God perhaps with sin upon his soul unrepented of and unpardoned. And besides being so great a crime against man, it is an insult of a daring kind against God himself, as an attack upon his visible image in which man was made. Hence it was made an express enactment of the Jewish law that the murderer should be put to death. No fine was to be imposed upon him; no compensation to be accepted from him; no rank or office was to screen him. Life must answer for life, and blood be given for blood. He who was convicted on the testimony of two or more witnesses,

for one only was not sufficient, was to suffer for his crime by his own death. It is thus declared in the close of the present chapter, "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.—Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

The execution of this sentence might at any time be inflicted by the nearest of kin to the person slain. He is here called the avenger of blood, and in other places the redeemer, and in each of these titles answers strictly to his great antitype, the Lord Jesus. If the crime was notorious, and could be proved by two witnesses, he was justified in his vengeance; but if he took it upon himself without sufficient proof of the murderer's

guilt, he was himself answerable, and might be convicted and punished.

Unintentional injuries however would often be done, and death might ensue from the hand of another by accident, without malice or intention of harm. For these cases, and even for that of murder itself, the cities of refuge were appointed. To these any one might flee who had slain another. There he might remain in safety under the protection of the priests and levites, and there the avenger of blood might not dare to set upon him. He was to be brought out for a fair and public trial. If he was convicted of murder on the evidence required, he was put to death: but if that evidence failed, or he appeared guilty only of what is called man-slaughter, he was sent back again to the city, and was there to remain in safety until the death of the High Priest, when he might return to his home and inheritance with safety. But if in the mean time he was found without the bounds of the city, the avenger might instantly put him to death without other proof or process.

Now this was a very merciful abatement of the power which had previously been exercised by the nearest of kin. He would seldom be upon the spot when the death of his relative occurred, whether by accident or otherwise. Some one of the cities was always within less than a day's journey from the most distant parts of the land. The Jewish writers say that the roads to these cities were kept constantly in good repair, and guide posts placed in them with the word Refuge inscribed upon them and pointing towards the city, that every facility might be afforded for escape. In the twentieth chapter of the book of Joshua we find the names and positions of the six cities appointed for this purpose, with a fuller description of the law and the forms respecting the man-slayer. But although provision was thus made for the impartial trial of even the wilful murderer, and the safety of him who had caused the death of another unintentionally, yet the value of the life of man, made in the image of God, was strongly marked in this appointment. He, who had inadvertently caused the death of another, though guiltless

of the crime or thought of murder, was nevertheless obliged to flee from his home and family, lest he should be slain, and even after acquittal of the capital crime, had to remain shut up within the bounds of the city of refuge, perhaps for the whole of his own life, as his liberation could only take place on the death of the High Priest. No compensation whatever could be made for his previous deliverance and return, any more than for the crime of actual murder, as we read in the thirty-second verse of this chapter which contains the text.—“Ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.”

II. I now proceed to consider this appointment in the second particular proposed, namely, as a typical representation of the mercy of God in Christ.

Caution is always necessary in the application of the types of the Old Testament. They were not intended to bear an exact analogy with their anti-types in all their minute parts and special circumstances, but

to set forth such a resemblance in their general and principal features as should be sufficient to indicate the things of which they were representations. Sometimes the inspired writers of the New Testament draw the parallel at large, and in these we can never err; sometimes they only make a more remote reference to them, and then we must proceed on a sober and chastened comparison of the one with the other. Such a reference to the cities of refuge the Apostle evidently makes in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews and eighteenth verse, where he speaks of himself and his fellow-Christians as having "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." I will therefore set before you some special circumstances in which the parallel holds.

1. The case of the manslayer is the general condition of mankind. For as he had sinned against his fellow-creature and against God by being the cause of death to one who was made in the image of God, so "all have sinned," by the commission of various offences both against God and man. I need not stay

to prove this first essential doctrine respecting man's salvation. It is written in such express terms and set forth in so many various ways in the word of God ; it is recognized so distinctly in all the parts of our common prayer ; it is so generally acknowledged at least in words, by all who profess and call themselves Christians ; that I may well take this as a point granted by all who hear me. Yes, brethren, although we may none of us be murderers or manslayers, yet we are all most assuredly sinners, and all the world is guilty before God.

2. We are hereupon exposed to the divine vengeance. For it is written, " The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and " The wages of sin is death." The transgressor has violated the law of God, and is consequently subject to its penalty. God is here himself the avenger, and his wrath may be looked upon as pursuing the sinner to destroy him, for " the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." If this overtake him before he has " fled for refuge to the hope set before

him, he must inevitably perish." He cannot long avoid its searching eye, or escape its swift destruction. "Be sure your sin will find you out," and though the forbearance of God may tarry long, yet vengeance will in the end be executed, the sinner will be cut off, and the soul cast into everlasting punishment.

3. But a refuge is provided. Here is the merciful appointment of God to all sinners under the gospel. Here is the crown and glory of his mercy and grace. A refuge is provided in the atonement and righteousness of his own Son. That is the hope unto which we are to flee for refuge, and on which we are to lay hold by faith. In this respect how well may we apply to him the words of David, "The Lord is my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour, thou savest me from violence." How well may we also apply to him the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat." Yes, brethren, Jesus is a complete refuge,

not only from the sword of divine vengeance, but also from all the storms and troubles of life. As David sings again, "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."

4. This refuge is proclaimed in the gospel. Did Joshua make known to his people the names and situations of the six cities which he selected to be the cities of refuge? Did the Jews keep the roads to them open and in good order? and did they set up posts with inscriptions to direct the trembling criminal in the way? Even so does the gospel most plainly point out the salvation of the Lord Jesus to the guilty and alarmed sinner. It shews him to be the way, and the truth, and the life. It describes him as our propitiation and peace, tells us that the way to his mercy is open, and that all things are now ready for our reception.

5. There is safety for all who flee unto him for refuge. This is another most assured truth of his word. For the Apostle says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." These are

plain words. And how powerfully may they be illustrated by the figurative language of the Old Testament. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "In God is my salvation and my glory." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe." But there is a mighty difference between the protection afforded by the cities of refuge, and the safety that is in Christ. The wilful murderer obtained from them only the privilege of an impartial trial, and the establishment of his guilt by witnesses, while if convicted by these he was condemned and given up to death. But Jesus removes the whole penalty of guilt. The most heinous transgressor that ever lived, if he finds refuge in him, shall not die, but live. It shall be said to him as Nathan said to David, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." As Jesus himself declared to the penitent and confessing thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," so he will save even the chief of sinners that flees to him. "Him that cometh

to me," he says, "I will in no wise cast ~~out~~ at."

6. But the sinner must take care to *abide* in Christ, after he has fled to him for refuge. If the manslayer left the city of refuge; in which he had sheltered himself, and was found again without its bounds, he might be slain. Jesus says, "Abide in me, and I in you. I am the vine, ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." But whosoever flees unto Christ for refuge, and continues in him, will be safe for ever. No one can fetch him out from thence to destroy him. "My sheep," he says, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." These, who have sought their safety in Christ, do not wait for their

deliverance *till* the death of the High Priest of their dispensation, for Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him ; but *through* his death, they obtain, at once, on their believing, liberty and life, the restoration of their patrimony, and return to their home.

And now I enquire in application, what say ye to these things ? What think ye, ye sinners, of the representation which has been made to you ? Has it led you to consider your guilt and danger ? Has it excited any desire to obtain a refuge in Christ ? Oh ! see in this glass the condition in which you are as to your soul, and the method which you must take for its safety. Behold the angel of death, as it were, pursuing you. See the quick steps which he makes towards you. Behold also the angel of the wrath of God ready to drive the sword of divine vengeance into you, and to destroy both body and soul in hell. Fear lest they overtake you, and lest their swift destruction come upon you. Instantly take refuge in the hope set before you. I have endeavoured to shew you what

that hope is. It is the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour from sin, and our hope of heaven. Moved with fear Noah prepared him an ark for the saving of his house. Moved with fear do you run into the refuge which is already prepared for all who will seek shelter and safety in it. Lot hastened from Sodom to the city appointed to receive him, when the Lord rained down from heaven fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain. Haste you from the everlasting fire of hell into that security which the rich atonement of Jesus provides for you. The manslayer fled from his house and home, and left all behind him that he might escape from the avenger of blood to the city of refuge. Flee you from the just indignation and pursuing vengeance of God to the all-sufficient sacrifice of his Son, who receiveth sinners. Escape for your lives. Even more than life is concerned. Eternity is concerned. Your soul is concerned. An eternal duration in infinite misery is the thing to be avoided. Leave all behind you to gain your refuge. Strive to win Christ and be found in him.

Remember that here is your only safety. Remember that "there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby you can be saved." Remember that you can make no compensation for your sins. No price can you pay in expiation of them. The only compensation which God's justice will accept is that which has been made by Jesus, and the only price of the least value for the redemption of the soul from sin and hell is "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Take one more admonition. When once you have fled to Christ for refuge, then never again leave him. Never venture out of his protection or the bounds which his gospel assigns you. Never return again to folly and sin and the world, lest a worst thing happen to you. Abide continually in his church and with his people, and then nothing shall ever be able to harm you.

Rejoice, ye righteous, who have already made Christ your refuge, in the great salvation which you have secured in him. Praise him for all his goodness, and love him for

his great mercy to you. The salvation which he has provided for you cost him his own life. No escape was permitted to him, no compensation was accepted from him. The spear went deep into his flesh, and a sense of the divine wrath overwhelmed his soul. Then he stood in your place, and suffered in your stead. The vials of God's indignation against sin were poured on his head, that his members might not suffer it. Here is *his* love, and here is a cause for *yours*. Oh! love the Lord then, all ye his saints, for the great love wherewith he hath loved you, as ye rejoice in the privileges with which he has invested you. Love and joy are the appropriate emotions which belong to your state of safety in him. And am I not right in exhorting *you* also to abide in Christ? Oh! never leave him nor forsake him for a moment, as you trust that he will never leave nor forsake you. Draw not back, lest his soul should have no pleasure in you. Backslide not lest he make you feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from him. Ever cleave closely to his side, and remain firm in his

service. Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Give to him your grateful service. Let the first and best affections of your hearts be fixed upon him. Seek to live to him more closely. Cleave to him with purpose of heart. Go not out of Christ, lest even you also perish. You are secure as in a privileged city while you remain with him, for he is able to keep you from every evil work unto his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XIII.

MOSES'S REVIEW OF THE HISTORY.

DEUT. I. 31, 32.

And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God.

WHEN, after the flood, the nations of the earth had again lost the knowledge of God, and were sunk in ignorance and idolatry, God was pleased, as we have seen, to call out from among them the patriarch Abraham, and to choose him and his posterity to be a peculiar people unto himself. For that extraordinary people he wrought many miracles, especially at their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt, and in their journey to

the land of Canaan. These we have placed before you, and have endeavoured to draw your attention to them, not only as affording instances of the omnipotent power of God, but as illustrations of the spiritual care and provision which he manifests and makes for all his people. To them he also gave his divine law, the great standard of morality, of universal and perpetual obligation, the transcript of his own nature, and the foundation of man's duty to God and his neighbour. This also I have endeavoured to expound to you, and to enforce upon you, that you may ever make it the rule of your life and practice. Moreover, the Lord gave unto the Jews many, special and peculiar ordinances, of which the most and the principal were appointments of sacrifices: and these were intended not merely as services and acts of religion, but as instructive intimations of the great truth of man's need of a propitiatory sacrifice, and shadowy representations of that atonement which it was in the mind and purpose of God to cause to be offered for the sins of the whole world. These I

have brought before you, and shewn you how they prefigured the various parts of the offices and work of the one great and glorious Redeemer. Among them the Lord was pleased also to raise up many extraordinary persons, who were not only distinguished in their own generation, and benefactors or examples to their countrymen, but were also typical, in their character and circumstances, of him, even the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all their various excellencies are combined, and who is the great representative, prophet, high priest, and lawgiver of his chosen people. And thus through the wonders which were wrought for them, the law which was given them, the ordinances which were appointed to them, and the men of note who appeared among them, we have passed through the first four books of Moses, and have brought him, and the people whom he led, to the borders of the promised land. They are standing on the shores of the river Jordan, which was properly its boundary. They had conquered all that part of the country which lay on the eastern side of it,

the side next to the wilderness, and there they now were, ready to pass over, and to take possession of the land which so many ages before had been given to their ancestors in promise. Their wanderings in the wilderness were about to cease, and they were on the point of entering into their expected rest. But Moses knew that it was not permitted to *him* to go into it: he was not to pass over Jordan, because in that rebellious murmuring of the people at Meribah in the desert of Zin, he sanctified not the Lord God in their eyes. Knowing therefore that his work was now ended, and that the future conducting of the people was confided to Joshua, he comes among them as it were to take his final leave of them, and to give them his last instructions, admonitions, and blessing. Here then the book of Deuteronomy begins. It is throughout, at least very nearly to the close, an address of this faithful servant of God to the children of Israel, to whom he had been the leader, lawgiver, and judge, through so many years. He recapitulates all the wonders, mercies, promises,

laws, precepts, and ordinances which God had given to them by him : he goes over the whole of the preceding history in all its principal parts, from their exodus out of Egypt to the day on which he was speaking to them : he reminds them of their various murmurings and rebellions ; he exhorts them repeatedly, with the most pressing earnestness, and the strongest warnings, to keep the law which the Lord had given them, and to remain steadfast and faithful in his worship and service. From this circumstance the book has its name. It is called Deuteronomy, a word compounded of two Greek ones, which together signify the second law, because it contains a second declaration of the law by the mouth of Moses, and is in fact, as I have said, a repetition of the most important part of all that has preceded. At the end of the fortieth year from their coming out of Egypt Moses recounts, in the hearing of many who had not seen them with their own eyes, the great wonders which the Lord had done for them, the gracious covenant into which he had entered with them, the divine knowledge

of himself which he had taught them, the admirable precepts of the moral law which he had given them, and the various ordinances of the ceremonial law which he had enjoined upon them. The past had been indeed a most eventful period, every circumstance of which deserved to be kept by them in perpetual remembrance : and the present was a season both as respected the termination of their wanderings, and the close of his own life, which made the whole of his address most interesting and important to them. About to quit the charge which he had so long had over them, and to resign it to another, about to see them enter into the promised land of their rest, but not to enter into it with them, he impressively calls upon them to remember the Lord's doings, his promises, his laws, his precepts, his judgments, his mercies, and earnestly exhorts them to observe all the instructions which had been given them, to keep faithfully the law which God had appointed to him, to take warning by the rebellious spirit which their fathers and themselves had so often manifested and

the punishments with which they had consequently been visited, and to adhere most firmly to the worship of the only true God of all the earth who had revealed himself unto them. Such is the purport of the book of Deuteronomy, upon which we are now about to enter in these our expository sermons.

But may we not be well employed, if we take occasion, from the nature of this book, to review the past portion of our own lives, and here to take our stand for a time, and look back upon the way in which we have been travelling thus far through life? What a multitude of the noble acts of the Lord might we have to survey! Alas, how many instances of ingratitude rebellion and backsliding might also rise up in memory before us! And oh! what powerful motives to future constancy and obedience might we gather from a retrospect of the Lord's dealings with us up to this hour! Well may the text be accommodated to such a purport. Let us try then, under the teaching and grace of the Holy Spirit, to call up our minds to such a review.

Behold then, as many of us as are alive at this day, what instances of goodness and mercy may we retrace, and how in this wilderness world the Lord hath borne us, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way which we have come.

We owe our first being to God. By his plastic hand our bodies were formed ; from his eternal existence our span of life proceeded ; by his almighty energy our reasoning faculties and sensitive powers, the judging head and feeling heart were given ; and from him our immortal souls are derived. God has also preserved and supported the existence which he has given us, and all those bounties of his providence, which flow along to us every day and hour are poured out upon us from the full hand of his kindness. He has protected us in many dangers which beset us, and has averted many evils which we saw coming upon us : he has kept us in many temptations which assaulted us, and delivered us out of many straits which pressed sorely upon us. And in how many more unseen and unknown dangers, trials,

difficulties, and miseries, which might have fallen upon us, has his watchful care been over us to protect and support us. There is not an individual, certainly not a Christian, in this congregation, who might not recollect many such instances in his own case, most suitable for calling forth a devout recognition of God, and the tribute of grateful praise.

And again, in our journey along life's arduous and chequered way, we have met with not a few afflictions. Pains of body and troubles of mind, the punishments of sin and the natural concomitants of our fallen state, disappointments and crosses, long and severe exercises of faith and patience, have been thickly strewn along the path of many of us, and have met others, though perhaps less frequently, on their way. These may be remembered as paternal chastisements of God, correcting us as a father does his son. We may think of them, not with the murmuring of the spirit, or the outbreak of complaint, but with the feelings of satisfaction and gratitude. Yes, brethren, having suffered in life, we may review our trials and sorrows

with as much thankfulness as even our mercies themselves ; and if we be really Christians, and understand the Lord's dealings with his people, we shall look back upon them with the assurance that they have as truly proceeded out of our heavenly father's care and love, as have our days of pleasure and joy. And we may remember, with the most grateful emotions, how our God has upheld us in them, how he has comforted us in the midst of them with the consolations that are in Christ, and how he has sanctified them, and made them work for our spiritual good. We can feel that they were needful chastisements, salutary warnings and checks, purifying furnaces, and strengthening exercises, whereby we have been made penitent and contrite, kept from sin or brought back to God, weaned from the world and rendered more spiritual, made more watchful humble and holy, able to direct and strengthen our brethren in similar trials, and to "comfort those who are in any trouble with the comforts wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God."

But in retracing the journey of life another class of mercies will pass in review before us, which have indeed gilded and sweetened this wilderness, and filled it full of flowers and fruits, have smoothed its rugged ways, and made them ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. These are of course the mercies which we have in Christ, but these have been experienced and can be experienced only by those who are really in Christ, through a true and lively faith. Oh! that the hearts of all such may go along with me in my endeavour to recapitulate those mercies, and that others may be stimulated to desire a part and portion in them.

One of the greatest mercies upon which the Israelites could look back was their deliverance out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage. Let us review our redemption from the yoke of sin and the bondage of Satan, out of what a depth of misery were we then uplifted! By what a wonderful price were we then bought! By what exertion of almighty power were we delivered out of the hands of our spiritual enemies! Here

is an epoch in her history on which the church of Christ can never be weary to look back, and of which she can never be tired in celebrating the praise. Here is the special mercy of earth, and the wonder of heaven. Here is what will fill the memory of the redeemed for eternal ages with never-ceasing songs of praise.

Did the Lord God feed his people of old with manna in the wilderness? Did he bring them forth water out of the rock to drink? Lo the spiritual manna is set before us continually in the gospel, and the call of the Spirit and the church is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Yes, we have the daily refreshment of the soul-nourishing word, and the ever-flowing streams of the water of life. We may review the goodness of the Lord in giving us the preaching of his everlasting gospel, and the ordinances of his house, whereby our souls are fed and satisfied.

Did the Lord open for the Israelites a passage through the Red Sea, and cause them to walk in its channel as on dry land?

Behold he has opened a passage through death, and will hereafter land us safely in the kingdom of heaven. Every opposing barrier is removed, every pursuing enemy will be destroyed. A way is made for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. We may look back upon that going down unto death of him who died for our sins, on that resurrection to life of him who rose again for our justification; we may review the tomb, the watch, the seal; we may listen to the declaration of the angel, the testimony of the women, the assertions of the disciples; we may contemplate his appearances among the brethren, and his glorious ascension from their view into heaven, and then we shall say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead."

Did God bring the Israelites at length in safety into the land of Canaan, and give them therein their promised rest? So hath he brought his believing people into a spiritual rest, wherein they are delivered from the

convictions of sin, the terrors of conscience, and the accusations of the law, where they possess a calm and tranquil spirit, and have "peace and joy in believing." So will he hereafter bring them into their heavenly and eternal rest, where they shall cease from all their labours, trials, and sorrows, where every enemy shall be destroyed, perpetual peace prevail in their bosoms, and everlasting glory crown their heads. Oh ! what will be the review which the happy spirit will then take of the dealings of the Lord with it through this journey of life ! What recollections of the goodness and mercy which have followed it all its days upon earth ! How will it then rehearse the noble acts of the Lord, and shew forth all his praise !

There are other subjects which, in imitation of Moses, we may also bring again to your recollection, though they have often before been stated to you. God gave to the Israelites the ceremony of circumcision, the passover supper, their tabernacle and temple, their priests and levites. On you he has

bestowed his sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, your churches and ministers. To them he gave his moral law and all its holy commandments. To you he has sent his glorious gospel with all its blessed privileges, its pure and sacred precepts. He favoured them with the revelation of his will in the Old Testament, and spake to them not only by Moses, but by various prophets and holy men of old. For you he has added the New Testament, introduced by his divine Son, and completed by his evangelists and apostles, wherein you see the things which prophets and righteous men desired to see, but could not see them. To them he gave sacrifices and burnt-offerings, with a sacrificing and mediating High Priest; he gave them a scape goat to bear away their sins into a land of forgetfulness, a water of separation to purify them, a jubilee on which they should each return to his liberty and inheritance, cities of refuge to which the manslayer might flee for safety. But to you he has given the Lord Jesus Christ, the sum and centre of all these things, your sacrifice and

High Priest, your substitute and intercessor, your deliverer and refuge, your purifier and portion. Oh ! look again and again, ye people of God, at all which the Lord has done for you in this wilderness, and trust the assurances which you have of the care mercy and grace with which he will still conduct you through it, until you come to the place which he has prepared for you.

Two observations, brethren, shall form the application of this sermon. The first shall be for the humiliation of myself and you. For as we look back must we not see how we have resembled the Israelites ? Must we not review in ourselves much of the same unbelief, the same murmurings, rebellions, and backslidings ? similar forgetfulness of God, and turning after idols ? Oh ! which of us shall make memory retrace the steps of his own life, and the workings of his own self-will, and the feelings of his own heart, and not know that the many reproaches cast upon the Israelites apply too aptly and correctly to himself ? Well may we feel that it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not

consumed, and that he, who caused the men of a whole generation to perish in the wilderness, might justly have placed upon us a similar sentence. Let us take shame to ourselves for the manner in which we have lived under so many mercies, for our indifference and worldliness, for the low nature of our pleasures and pursuits, for our breach of his commandments and precepts, for our neglect of his sacraments and ordinances, for our disregard of his gospel, our contempt of his Son, our resistance to his Spirit. On such a review what can we say but this, "Righteousness belongeth unto thee, O Lord, but unto us confusion of face." Mercy and goodness have been thine, but ingratitude and unbelief, rebellion and sin, have been ours? Oh! let us be greatly humbled by the recollection of the manner in which we have despised or abused our mercies, and abase ourselves deeply before him. Israel had much to remember of the Lord's distinguishing favour and wonders, and so have we. Israel was too generally a stiff-necked and rebellious people, and so are we. May

God make us ashamed of the past, and fill us with contrition.

My second observation shall be for an admonition to myself and you. The great goodness of God to us, through the course of our lives, when the various instances have passed in review before us, surely require a grateful return. What shall we render again unto the Lord for all that he hath done unto us? What but the tribute of a grateful heart, and the service of a devoted life? If the recalling into our minds a summary of his manifold gifts and gracious dealings does not affect our hearts with love and gratitude, of what can we be made? Of the cold icicle, or the adamant stone? Nay, of worse than either, of a depraved nature and an un-renewed heart. Oh! let us pray for the quickening influence of the divine Spirit, that we may have hearts to love God for his goodness, and to live to his honour and glory. My Christian friends and brethren especially, let it be our care to manifest that we feel the constraining influence of his goodness. Let us all gratefully say, "Bless the Lord, O my

soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Let us serve the Lord and fear him and walk in all his ways and keep his commandments. With a true and perfect heart, with a faithful and devoted life, let us henceforth aim to live in his service and be for his glory. He who hath done, and is doing, such great things for us, should have great things done for him. He should have the whole of our powers for the remainder of our lives.

SERMON XIV.

REGARD TO THE WORD OF GOD.

DEUT. VI. 6—9.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart ; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

It was well asked by Moses in the fourth chapter, and seventh verse, “ What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for ? And what nation

is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life : but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons." Where privileges are great they should be valued and improved, and where much has been given, much will be required. The object of a divine revelation is that it may be believed, and the object of the gift of God's law is, that it may be obeyed. A strong injunction is therefore given to the Israelites in the text, and in the passage which I have just quoted, that they should both keep the law themselves, and teach it to their children, even to the most remote generations. Here then are two duties inculcated, and in this order I will endeavour to enforce them upon you. And that they may be more practically and personally regarded, I will not treat them as they are here enjoined upon the Jews, but I will address myself directly unto you. For under

whatever obligations they were to fulfil these duties, the same are equally binding upon you, and in addition to the moral precepts of the law, you have also the doctrines commandments and ordinances of the gospel which you are bound to receive and practice, and diligently to teach unto your children. The words of God are given to you in their fullness. The scriptures are now completed. You have both the old and the new testaments, and a full statement of both faith and practice, all that you are to believe, and all that you are to do, are therein set before you.

I. In the first place therefore I say, keep these words yourselves. Personal religion is indispensable. The words of God are spoken to every individual, and when Moses addresses his nation in the singular number, as if they were but one person, we may be thereby reminded of the individuality of religion, I mean of the necessity that every separate and single individual should heartily embrace it for himself, and obediently practise it in his own life. Personal religion is moreover the foundation of all family and national religion.

How can he teach another, who has not been taught himself? How can he instruct his children in the principles of religion, who does not know them by his own experience? Or how can he enforce its duties upon them by precepts if he does not confirm the precept by his own example?

Therefore it is said, “These words which I command thee this day, shall be *in thy heart*,” by which I understand Moses to mean, shall be in thy love and memory. The heart is the seat of the affections, and out of it are the issues of life. The mouth speaketh out of the abundance of the heart: the actions of the life flow out of its emotions. The understanding may be enlightened with the knowledge of divine things, the judgment may be convinced and approve of them, but if the affections of the heart be not engaged to love and delight in them, there will be little of real obedience and willing duty.—David could say, “Oh, how I love thy law!” My delight is in thy commandments. “The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.” “How sweet are

thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." St. Paul also could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." And every one who is truly changed by the power of the Holy Ghost will love the word of God, in all its doctrines, promises, and precepts, and will endeavour to become obedient to that word in all things. How greatly then should we desire that the word of God may be written on the "fleshy tables of our hearts," that it may be put into our minds, and written on our hearts, that so we may say, as the blessed Redeemer said in prophecy, by David his type, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart."

But the words of God must also be in our minds, our continual thought and remembrance. To this purport are the directions in the eighth and ninth verses, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." All our faculties are corrupted, and the powers of memory

and thought are greatly impaired. We are prone to forget things which it is of the utmost consequence to us to remember, and the mind wanders perpetually from the consideration of subjects on which it ought to be intently fixed. Therefore it is very useful to have these defects counteracted and these fallen powers assisted by suitable exterior helps. Perhaps the principal aim of these precepts was to secure the constant attention of the Israelites to the word of God, but we know that they also applied them literally, and were accustomed to have slips of parchment with portions of the Scriptures written upon them, which were on different parts of their persons and garments, and that they also wrote them on their houses and gates. It would not be a bad custom for ourselves were we to place striking texts of Scripture in our rooms. If less ornamental, they might be more useful than the pictures and other decorations with which we are wont to embellish them. It is good and pleasant to me to see them thus written on the walls of many of our country churches, and I

remember the salutary admonition which used to meet my eye as I entered into one of them. “Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God.” Many are wont to carry a bible constantly in their pocket, and it is useful to have the word of God to refer to, on all occasions, and to occupy the mind at every suitable opportunity. But all these outward helps to the memory and thought should be used as helps. The meditation of the mind itself, and the devout and lively affections of the heart must be occupied on the word of God, and pious persons have experienced many of their most delightful and profitable seasons when their souls have been engaged in holy communion with God, and his word, in their solitary walks abroad, or on their beds in the darkness of the night-watches. And happy are those persons who have much of the holy scripture imprinted on their memory, out of which they can draw the healthful streams of instruction and comfort, as from a well of living water. “Let the word of Christ then dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” Gain

a large acquaintance with all parts of the sacred volume, but especially with those which relate most to Christ and his great salvation. Use all the knowledge of it which you may gain to your own spiritual benefit. Make it the principle by which you think, speak, and act. Apply it to your heart. Apply it to your life. Compare with it all that you hear in the sermons of preachers. From it alone receive, and by it alone maintain or defend, your views of truth. In all the circumstances of life, whatever be the trial to which you may be exposed, the doubt which you feel, the duty you have to perform, set the word of God before you, with prayer for the divine teaching of the Holy Ghost, and make it definitive of the course which you pursue.

- For let us ever remember that the object of all this knowledge, love, and remembrance of the word of God, is that we may keep it. Since the blessed Saviour, the divine author of that word, says of himself, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," we may well say the same of the word itself. If ye love the word of God, keep it. If you know it

and remember it, forget not to obey it. This is the test, and will be the only proof of your regard to it. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,” saith St. James, “deceiving your own selves.” I trust, my brethren, that you will all acquaint yourselves very fully with the holy scriptures, that you will love them, and revere them, that you will meditate upon them, and talk of them; but above all things I desire that you will faithfully and conscientiously keep them. Let all that you know of the scriptures, all that you hear and read, all that you remember, meditate upon, or speak of, be brought out in simple and sincere obedience. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

II. I have thus set before you the duty of keeping the word of God yourselves, I now proceed to that of teaching it to your children. Thus far has been on the important subject of personal religion; the remainder of this sermon will be on an equally important one, the subject of family religion. The words in the text are, “Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou

shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This is again repeated in the same way in the eleventh chapter and nineteenth verse, "Ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." God thus provided that the divine instruction, which he had given them by direct revelation, should not be lost, but that it should continue to enlighten and guide the nation through succeeding generations. He thus provided also that the mercies and promises which he had given to the fathers should be possessed by their children, and that those so dear to the parental feelings might like themselves inherit the blessing, by knowing how to keep the law of his covenant. This is very beautifully expressed in the opening of the seventy-eighth Psalm, "Give ear, O my people, incline your ears unto the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings

of old ; which we have heard and known, and such as our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children : that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born ; who should arise and declare them to their children ; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." There is set before us the great privilege of Israel, in the possession of the law and the testimony: there is also a great duty, that they should make them known unto their children: and there is the holy purpose expressed for the effecting of which the divine instruction should be taught them, even that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments.

Thus a strict command was given to the

Jews for the pious education of their children. They were in particular enjoined to instruct them fully in the nature and meaning of their national observancies and ceremonies. Thus of the Passover, which was to be observed by the Israelites through all their generations by an ordinance for ever, the Lord says, “When your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service, ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.” So again in the consecration of the first-born male of men and beasts unto the Lord, of which certain were to be offered in sacrifice, and others redeemed, the beasts with a sum of money, and the children of the people by the substitution of the whole tribe of Levi. In this case we again read, “It shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass when Pharaoh

would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the first-born of my children I redeem." So also they were to take care that their children were instructed in their public religious memorials. When, in passing over Jordan, they were ordered to take twelve stones, a stone for a tribe, and place them as a memorial of the miraculous manner in which God divided the waters of that river, and made them dry ground through the midst of it. They were told that it was done for this purpose, "That this may be a sight among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." Such care was taken that the fathers of Israel should

make known to their children the great truths of their divine revelation, should teach them the words of the Lord, his commandments, statutes, and ordinances, instruct them well in their ceremonies and signs, that the children might learn to fear the Lord, and serve him, and remain in covenant with him, and transmit the knowledge of the Lord and his truth unto children's children in all ages.

For this purpose they were to make them a subject of daily conversation, when they sat together in the domestic circle, when they walked together in the fields, at night ere they retired to rest, and in the morning when they arose. And truly it must have been an interesting and edifying thing to hear a pious Israelite discoursing to his family of the things of God, telling of all his wonders, and their national privileges, and his own family mercies, and his personal experience of the Lord's goodness, and thus leading his children to receive the God of their fathers, and to love him, and fear him, and walk in his ways. Surely it is one of the most effectual methods for impressing the words, works,

and mercies of God upon our memories and our hearts, and of communicating the knowledge and love of them to our families, to make them the subject of frequent conversation, and to talk of them with an interest suitable to their infinite importance.

And now, ye Christian parents, that I may apply this subject to you, let me ask you, if the duty of instructing your children in the principles of religion be not as binding upon you as it was upon Jewish parents. Are not you also bound to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?” Assuredly you are, and I trust that you will feel your obligation and perform it. God requires it of you; the duty which you owe your children demands it of you; and your love for them will, I trust, prompt you to the anxious and conscientious fulfilment of it. You have brought them into the world; you must bring them up for God; or it may also be better for them if they had never been born. They are beings now born for immortality, and their eternal interests should be consulted by you above any part of their welfare in this present

life. O teach them the word of God, and talk to them of all his grace and goodness, his promises and threatenings. Tell them of that great redemption and that blessed Saviour who died for you and them. Tell them of their fallen state, shew them their sinful nature, speak to them of the renewing grace of the Holy Ghost, of the necessity of a divine change, of the efficacy of prayer, of faith, and of holiness. Instruct them also, as the Jewish parents were to do. Not only in the doctrines and moral precepts, but in the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church of Christ. Make them to understand the nature of Baptism, of Confirmation, of the Lord's Supper. Teach them the beauty and excellency of all the services and offices of our book of Common Prayer, and how to join in them aright. O pray for them and with them, that God may give them a spiritual discernment and a real conversion of heart and lead them through life in the ways of piety and holiness. Happy indeed is the parent who can say to his beloved child, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, I

have led thee in right paths." Happy he who can say to him, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Happy indeed is that parent who is privileged to see his children spiritually born again of God, and growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Happy when the olive branches that are growing round his table are evidently gracious plants of the Lord's planting; or when they have left his house for homes of their own, are living in the fear of God, and faith of Jesus, zealous for God, useful in their places, and themselves again training up their own children in the way in which they should go.

O ye children, who are thus brought up, "hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother." "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and

when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.” O remember the instructions which ye receive, and diligently practice them. Great is your mercy in having parents taught of God and therefore able to teach you. Where much is given, much may well be required. Much *will* be required. And sad will be the doom of those children who, born of religious parents, and instructed in the principles of religion, yet are irreligious themselves, careless, worldly, sinful. Oh what an aggravation of their forgetfulness and contempt of God! What a sin against light! What a rejection of Christ! What a despite done to the Spirit! O ye children of pious parents, may that Spirit lead you to a better mind.

SERMON XV.

UNGODLY MARRIAGES PROHIBITED.

DEUT. VII. 3, 4.

Neither shalt thou make marriages with them ; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods ; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

ISRAEL was to be a peculiar people unto the Lord, a holy nation, wholly appropriated to his service to honour him among the surrounding nations, and shew forth his praise. Hence they were to keep themselves separate from all others who knew not the Lord. They were to make no covenant with them, nor

admit them to terms of friendship and intercourse. Above all they were to beware of any intermarriages with them. Such intimate connection with them would be the most likely way of leading them to embrace their habits and manners, and seducing them into their idolatrous practises, and therefore the Israelites were strictly prohibited from entering into them. The *prohibition* is formally given in the text; “Thou shalt not make marriages with them.” The *effect* is plainly stated; “For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods.” And the fatal *consequence* of such transgression is instantly added; “So will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and destroy thee utterly.”

I. We will, in the first place, consider some instances recorded in scripture, of such marriages, effects, and consequences. They commenced at an early part of the world's history. We read in the sixth chapter of Genesis, that “when man began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born, unto them, the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took

them wives of all which they choose :” that is, the descendants of Seth, who had previously adhered to the worship of God, intermarried with the descendants of Cain, who had renounced the Lord, and set up idols for themselves. And what was the *effect* ? Many of the progeny of these became indeed mighty men, and men of renown in the concerns and revolutions of the earth ; but we find that “ God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” And what was the *consequence* ? Thus we read, “ It repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, “ I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth ; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.” Thus through the intermixture by marriages of the godly with the ungodly, the corruption of mankind became universal, and the flood came and destroyed them all with the exception of Noah and his family.—There are lamentable

instances of this transgression in the history of the Israelites, which were ever followed by the same effects and consequences. Thus we read in the third chapter of the book of Judges and the fifth verse. "The children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites; and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons." Now what was the effect? Thus it follows. "And served their Gods, and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves." And then what followed? Thus we read, "Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-risha-thaim, king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-risha-thaim eight years." This was the case with the people collectively. There is also a striking instance in their history of an individual being led away from God through the same cause. That individual was the renowned king Solomon. The wisdom

of Solomon is proverbial. His piety also stands highly on record. For of this you may read strong proof from all that he said, and the prayer which he prayed, at the dedication of the temple, in the eighth chapter of the first book of Kings. But this wise man and this pious man was led astray. Even he departed from God, and forgot him, and became sottish and idolatrous, and solely from this cause. Thus we read of him in the beginning of the eleventh chapter of the same book, the first book of Kings. "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, ye shall not go in unto them, neither shall they come in unto you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines." And what was the effect? "His wives turned away his heart. And he went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians,

and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites, and built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon: and likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods." And what was the consequence? In the next verse we have it. "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel." Oh! it is a deplorable thing when the heart of a wise man and a pious man is turned away from the Lord. But so it was with Solomon. And so it may be, nay so it probably will be, with all who follow after his fatal example. We see that these things succeed each other in regular order. The Lord's people go and make marriages with those who know not the Lord, but serve other gods, the world, and what not? Then these turn away the heart of the Lord's people from serving the Lord. And then the Lord's anger is kindled against them, and he punishes them in his wrath and sore displeasure. How important then is the prohibition of the

be the intimate friend and constant companion of another who is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God is most incongruous, or that one who desires to order all his concerns by the principles of the gospel should be closely associated with another who acts solely on the principle of worldly interest.

But if the principle applies to connections, partnerships, and fellowship of all kinds, how much more must it apply to a connection so intimate, so close, so indissoluble as that which is formed between husband and wife by marriage! Here is a connection in which the interests of both parties become one, in which they are constantly to live together, and in which the pursuits, habits, and all the circumstances of the daily life of the one must necessarily depend upon and be regulated by those of the other. Here is a connection in which above all others the parties should take sweet counsel together, share each other's joys and sorrows, be of one heart and mind, love with the purest love which earth can consecrate, and be joined together in a union so near and so dear as that our Lord himself has

said of it, "They two shall be one flesh." Oh ! then of what importance it is that they should be likeminded in the most important of all subjects, that they should think and feel similarly on that which interests the heart more than any thing else, on that which affects the happiness beyond any of the other circumstances of life, and which influences the whole character and conduct far more strongly than any other motive. This is a connection consecrated by God himself in paradise, and declared by his word to be "honourable among all men;" a connection hitherto in this country always entered into with the solemnities of religious ceremonies and vows; and so I trust it ever will be by those who have any right feelings of its nature, and of the necessity of God's blessing upon it; a connection also which by the law of God himself, as well as by the law of the land, can be dissolved only by the death of one of the parties. Can there be any other connection whatever that requires so much thought, prudence, and prayer, before it be entered into? any that need so much discrimination

of character, so much assurance of the principles of the party with whom it is to be formed? Is there any other which involves so intimately not only the whole of the present happiness and future prospects of this life, but which must also necessarily have so great an influence on the prosperity of the soul, on the service of God, and the final hopes of heaven.

Hence then there cannot be a more unjustifiable, imprudent, and dangerous step taken in life, than when a pious person forms a marriage union with one who is without a sound religious principle. How can two such walk together, being not agreed as to the first of all principles and duties? How can they go up to the house together as friends, and followers of the same Saviour? How can they conduct the affairs of their family? How can they pray together? How can they be helpers of each other's faith? What sympathy, what comfort, what instruction or strength can the religious party derive from the other who knows nothing of religion—has no feeling of its love and power, and takes

no interest of it in the heart? What is likely to be the effect. Distance and estrangement from the other on the most important and interesting of all subjects, discomfort, secret mourning, misgivings of conscience, interruptions and hindrances of private prayer and the public means of grace. These will be enough to embitter the whole domestic life of one who errs so grievously. But worse than these things may be expected. And upon something worse than earthly unhappiness is God's prohibition of such marriages founded. They will turn away the heart from following the Lord. There's the danger. I do not go so far as to say that such will be the *certain* effect. But I do say that such effect will *probably* follow. The word of God teaches us to look for such an effect, and experience proves that in most instances it thus happens.

Now why is this? Whence does it happen that the religious party almost invariably suffers the loss of religion and is drawn away into the world, and gives up the Lord's service? Why is not the other party more commonly, or at least as commonly, brought

over to embrace a better way? In great measure because of the depravity of human nature. Irreligion, worldliness, pleasure, vanity, sin, are all congenial to the heart of fallen man. Into these we fall easily. Nature makes no struggle against them, feels no pain in gliding into them. But religion is contrary to our fallen nature. Nature takes up a cross in entering upon it, and watchfulness, exertion, determination of spirit, and a constant use of all the means of grace and of every help that can be obtained, are ever necessary to keep it up in health and vigour in the soul. It is uniformly described as a wrestling, a race, and a warfare. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." How then can the religious principle be kept up in sufficient life and power under a constant exposure to the starving, paralyzing, deadening influence of worldly principles from the person who is nearest in relation and dearest in love? It becomes gradually undermined, it gives way, it falls. God is renounced, and the world is chosen.

Let me observe however, in addition, that although this defection from religion arises in great measure from the depravity of our nature, yet I apprehend that the principal reason why the religious person suffers, rather than the irreligious gains, by such an alliance, is because the conduct of the religious person in contracting such a marriage is in opposition to God, and contrary to his declared will and word. His displeasure is on such a marriage. Do I use too strong a word if I say, his curse is on such a marriage. If those who profess to serve him, and to seek his favour, will not obey his word, if they will follow their own imaginations and desires, and choose their own passions or worldly interests, what can they expect but that he should leave them? This is the main cause of their declension. They have not regarded God in the most important matter of their lives. In a case of which he had forewarned them, in a connection which he had prohibited, in a command which he had given them to marry, if they do marry, “only in the Lord;” if, I say, in a case

respecting which they have been so solemnly forewarned, so strictly prohibited, so authoritatively commanded, they allow themselves to be actuated by any other principles than his fear and love, and choose to act upon the allurements and suggestions of passion or interest, nothing can be reasonably looked for as the result, but that God will withdraw himself from them, that he will leave them to their choice, and suffer them to be corrupted by the daily intercourse to which they have madly and wickedly exposed themselves. For be it ever remembered that this connection is a voluntary one. Nothing can ever compel a person to form it. There is always the power of choosing or refusing to enter into it. And therefore the person who forms such a marriage, male or female, is inexcusable, and might from the first have counted upon the cost of being drawn away from following the Lord.

Here then in conclusion let me speak a word or two, first, to parents. Oh! be very careful what connections you desire for your children. I speak to parents who profess to

regard the things of God, and to be concerned for their children's souls. Watch over their early intimacies, and warn them of the fatal rock on which they may shipwreck all their present happiness and prospects for eternity. Seek not for them riches or rank. Desire principles and character. There are doubtless circumstances of a mere earthly nature, on which it will behove both you and them to use prudence and discretion; but never forget that here especially "one thing is needful." That one thing is a religious principle and character, the fear of God and the love of the Saviour. This should be made indispensable. Nothing can compensate for the want of it. Let it be ever understood that this is the principal object of your desire and approbation. Especially if your child too be religious, you should be the more frequent and earnest in your warnings and advice. Miserable would it make you should you see a beloved child, of whose piety you had formed the best hopes, led away from God through having entered into marriage with an ungodly person. And if there should

be cause for self-reproach that you had countenanced or encouraged this connection from motives of earthly advancement for your child, oh ! you will feel many a piercing pang, and pass through many a bitter hour. Christian parents, be anxious for your children with Christian anxiety. Look to their eternal interests in all things ; watch over them ; caution them ; advise them ; pray for them ; and use all your influence to lead them to God, and to make them adhere to him.

Another word or two, in the next place, to the unmarried. Don't forget this subject, nor disregard it. Don't smile at it, nor treat it contemptuously or lightly. It is of infinite importance to you. It concerns all your domestic peace and comfort, and your eternal happiness. Especially let it be most deeply regarded by such of you as make profession of religion. Adhere in steadfast principle and determination to the rule of God's word, to marry "only in the Lord." Let that command be laid down as authoritative and decisive on the point. If through prayer and the blessing of God you obtain a partner of

pious disposition you will be blessed indeed. You will thus become a mutual support and comfort to each other in every trial of life; your prayers will ascend together to a throne of grace; you will walk together in the house of God as friends; your household will be ordered in all things on congenial views and wishes; you will be equally engaged in bringing up your children, if you have any, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such is the wife, young men, whom you should desire. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she is to be prized. Such is the husband, young females, that you should desire to have. On the principles of such a one you may depend with safety. On him you may repose your earthly cares, and from him you may expect to derive assistance and strength in following the Lord. You may walk together happily through life and be glorified together in heaven.

SERMON XVI.

THE USE OF TRIALS.

DEUT. VIII. 2.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.

FALLEN man alas is naturally too prone to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. He magnifies his nature as possessing in itself the principles of virtue, and the disposition and power to do right, prides himself in his own meritorious actions, and boasts of the goodness of his heart. It is God's aim to destroy this pride and vain-glory, to make man think humbly of himself, and to bring him to an entire dependance on

his grace. Therefore he uses measures in his providence to effect this aim, and from the nature of the case, these must necessarily be such as are painful.

We have seen enough in the history of the Israelites to convince us that they partook largely of this common depravity. We learn from this passage of Scripture that God adopted a particular method of treating them, that he might bring them into a correct view of themselves, and a proper spirit towards him. This was his discipline of them for so long a space as forty years in the wilderness.

Their being compelled to remain there all that time was originally a punishment from God for their murmuring distrust and fear, at the time when Caleb and the others returned from examining the land of Canaan, as we saw in a former sermon. They were then on the borders of it, and seemed just about to enter in. But cowardice and unbelief prevented. They conceived a terror of its strong and warlike inhabitants, thought that they should fall by the sword, and that

their wives and children should be a prey ; and proposed to return again into Egypt. Therefore God punished them with an exclusion from that promised land. He suffered them not indeed to return into Egypt, but he made them to wander about for forty years, until all those, except Caleb and Joshua, who were at the time of their numbering twenty years old and upwards, should be dead.

Such was the punishment with which the Lord visited the unbelief and sin of the Israelites ; and the purpose of that punishment is stated in the text. I wish to draw from it an important lesson for you, and to set before you this very profitable and interesting subject, the Use of Trials.

God, we see, was pleased to put his ancient people to a trial of much severity. He led them about, during all that long space of time, in a place where they were exposed to many dangers and privations. He kept them fearfully and painfully journeying in “ that great and terrible wilderness.” As it is called in the fifteenth verse, “ wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where

there was no water." Yet he "brought them forth water out of the rock of flint:" still that was their only drink. And "he fed them with manna" from heaven: still that was their only food. And all this was, as Moses says to them, "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." Now it is evident that God still exercises his own people under this present dispensation of the gospel with many severe trials, and we feel assured that they are still sent for the same important ends. Let us then proceed to consider those ends, as they are stated in the text.

I. The first end which God would effect by the trials of his people is to humble them.

Humility is the very first of all spiritual graces. It is the first in order of time in the soul's renewal, and it must continue, yea and increase through every portion of the new life. Man fell through pride; he must be humbled that he may be restored. Oh! it is a hard lesson for our proud hearts to learn, but indispensable for our salvation. It is a

disposition to which we must be brought, however painful and mortifying the discipline necessary to produce it. Therefore our wise and merciful Father exercises this discipline. He uplifts his hand and lays on his rod. The voice of the rod, even while the smart is felt is this, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." As these sermons are expository of scripture history, let me give you some scripture instances of the dealings of God with his servants in this matter. See the case of Hezekiah. God had restored him to health after a dangerous sickness, and had promised to add unto his life fifteen years, and had given him a miraculous sign in token thereof, yet "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up." This he manifested by a vain-glorious exhibition of his wealth and the power of his kingdom to the ambassadors of the King of Babylon, who had sent to congratulate him on his recovery. Therefore God visited him with his anger and threatenings: "There was wrath upon

him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.” And this had the intended effect. “Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart.” See another instance in his son Manasseh. He was a very wicked King and did much evil in the sight of the Lord. Therefore God sent an army of the King of Assyria against him, which took him captive, and “bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.” Now mark the object of this, and how it succeeded. “When he was in affliction he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.”—Observe this also in the case of Job. The whole object of his most heavy trials seems to have been to produce this end. He was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” He was also conscientious, sincere, and benevolent. But he was somewhat too self-righteous. He stood out in his own justification, and would hold fast his own righteousness. But God showed him at length his own justice and holiness, vindicated himself from the charge of injustice and cruelty in the afflictions with which

he had visited him, and then Job was humbled, and cried, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Take only one more instance, the case of St. Paul. He had been "caught up to the third heaven." He had "heard unspeakable words." But when this was over he had a great trial. "There was given to him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him." We are not informed of the exact nature of this affliction. But why was it sent to him? He tells us; "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations." From each and all of these instances we see that God sends trials to men in order that he may make or keep them humble.

II. The second use of trials mentioned in the text is to prove us.

Every master must prove his servants to know if they are competent for their work and trustworthy. Every ploughman must prove his oxen, every workman his tools, every soldier his weapons. In like manner the Lord God proves his people to discover their characters, dispositions, principles, and

conduct. And no method is more effectual than that of afflictions. Love is never more proved than when it remains true and steadfast under the chastening hand of God. Faith is never more proved than when it is kept under a long delay of the hoped-for promise. Oh! brethren, it is when ye have long been “in heaviness through manifold temptations,” that “the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire,” is “found unto praise and honour and glory.” Yes, brethren, it is for this that the Lord “is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap.” For this he sits “as a refiner and purifier of silver:” and he purifies his people, and purges them “as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” Also by those heavy trials which arise from fallen spirits and from evil men does the Lord often prove his servants. Thus was Job proved when Satan was permitted to put forth all his power against him. Thus was Jesus proved in the wilderness. And for the same purpose God says in the thirteenth chapter of this book

of Deuteronomy, that when prophets and dreamers of dreams arose to lead the Israelites to go after other gods and serve them, it was thus that "the Lord their God proved them, to know whether they loved the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul." Beloved brethren, may you and I, in whatever way *we* are proved, be enabled to manifest the sincerity of our love and the steadfastness of our faith.

III. The third use of trials which Moses here mentions is, to know our hearts.

The prophet Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Then he adds, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." So again we read in the book of Revelation, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." Now afflictive dispensations tend greatly to bring out the latent emotions of men's souls. Impatience, discontent, rebellion against God, and other unholy and hateful passions, often lie hid in the heart, so long as all around is peaceful and prosperous. And in like manner patience, and

submission, and other such meek and humble graces, keep there a secret unknown seat, while there is nothing to call them forth into observation. But in the day of adversity's storm the previously smooth surface often becomes a raging ocean. On the other hand the mild eye of resignation and heavenly love shines loveliest and brightest through its tears. Oh! my brethren, we should never shrink from this searching of the Spirit of God into our inmost souls; nor complain of the pain which the process may cause us. We should never be unwilling to know all that is in our hearts. We should always wish to learn the real character of our affections, desires, tempers, and every thing that is within us, that we may keep our hearts with all diligence, and avoid the sin which most easily besets us. Oh! hear the prayers of David, and make them your own. "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

All this humbling and proving and knowing the heart of the Israelites was to see, whether they would keep his commandments, or no. Not that God does not know what are the characters and what will be the conduct of all mankind and of every individual; but he will have these characters developed and this conduct exhibited in the sight of all, that his own justice and righteousness may never be impugned. He will be glorified in the love and faith, the obedience and service, of those whom he shall afterwards receive into his glory; and he will be justified in the punishments which he shall finally execute by the evident sins and transgressions of those to whom they are awarded.

But as the nation of the Israelites were his own peculiar people, we find that their eventual benefit was the great object of all this long painful dispensation to them in the wilderness. This is still more fully stated in the sixteenth verse, where Moses, repeating the Lord's dealings with them, assigns this as the reason, "that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good

at thy latter end." And oh! be assured, my real Christian brethren, that such is the object of all God's trials of *you*. Not a chastening do you experience, not a pain do you feel, not an affliction comes upon you, not a trial of any kind is sent unto you, but what is intended for your good. They are to purge away your present dross. They are to refine your graces. They are to strengthen your faith, and increase your love, and perfect every excellence of the Christian character. They are to cause your light to shine before others, and to make your own evidences appear more clearly to yourselves. It may be that they are painful at present, but they are to do you good at your latter end. They are to make you more meet for an entrance into heaven, and to brighten your crown of glory there. Such are the uses of the real believer's trials. Who would not be submissive and resigned under them? Nay who would not be thankful for them? Who would not say, this being the case, it must be good for me when I am afflicted.

And now, beloved brethren, in application

of this subject, I call your attention to two considerations presented to us in this chapter from which the text is taken.

The first is found in the fifth verse. "Thou shalt consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." We see then that the afflictions with which God visits his people are not vindictive punishments, but corrective chastenings. They are necessary for them in their present state of depravity, and are proofs of his fatherly love and care. So the Apostle says to suffering believers under the gospel: "God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not." He also draws this remarkable contrast between the fathers of our flesh, and the Father of spirits. "They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." And he adds, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised

thereby.” Well then might he give this scriptural admonition, “My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” Oh! notice this double direction. On the one side, “Despise not the chastening of the Lord.” Be not careless and negligent of it, and indifferent to either the cause of it or its intention. Let it not be considered as a matter of mere fortuitous chance, or produced only by natural effects and earthly instruments; but see the hand of the Lord in it. Let it not pass away unobserved and unimproved; but lay it to heart; enquire why it is sent, and what end it is to answer; believe that it is sent in mercy, and endeavour to reap from it the good which it may produce. On the other hand, “Faint not when thou art rebuked of him.” Give not way to too gloomy views of the affliction. Fall not into despondency and despair, lest thou “be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” Let not thy spirit be depressed, the energies of thy mind destroyed, and thy body weakened by it. Trust in the Lord in the midst of it,

and through all its continuance. Put forth the power of prayer. Let patience have its perfect work. Hope thou still in the Lord, and look upon the whole as the effect of his fatherly love and care.

The second consideration is found in the sixth verse. “Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.” This, I have already observed, was the great object of all God’s trials of the Israelites, even to see “whether they would keep his commandments or no.” Oh! let it be always manifest in you that you are still fearing and serving the Lord and that you never neglect your duty to him, even in your deepest distresses and most perplexing circumstances. Shew that you love the Lord and his house and its ordinances, and seek comfort and strength in him and in them in your heaviest trials.—And be particularly careful also when the Lord in mercy removes your distress and restores you to happiness and prosperity. Moses assured the Israelites that God would bring them into the good the promised land. He told them

how flourishing and prosperous all their circumstances should be. He warned them to beware when all this their wealth and outward happiness were possessed, that they forgot not the Lord their God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes. He warned them most earnestly lest in their flourishing condition their heart should be lifted up, and they should forget the Lord their God. Oh ! there is great need of this warning still; for many, after thoughts and promises of good in their sicknesses and trials, have returned with returning health and prosperity to the world and its follies and pursuits with as much avidity as ever. The Lord enable us all to adhere to and glorify him in sickness and health, in sorrow and joy, in riches and poverty. Oh ! beloved brethren, desire, pray, and endeavour that in every condition and circumstance of life you may ever cleave to your God in faithful and steadfast obedience. Never depart from him. Never let adversity force you to decline from his service, and to give up your observance of his commandments, or your attendance on his

house and ordinances. Never let prosperity lead you to forget the Lord your God, and grow proud or careless. "Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy," still let your unshaken regard be given to God ; still uniformly walk with Jesus in his ways, and he will do you good both now and at your latter end. He will guide you by his counsel, and receive you with glory.

SERMON XVII.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOD.

DEUT. x. 12, 13.

And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good ?

THE happiness of man consists in his having right views of God, with right affections towards him, and in the fulfilment of the duties which he owes to his glorious Creator and Redeemer. For God is not only the great object of love and reverence ; but all that he has required of mankind is only what ought to be required ; and all of it is for the benefit of

those of whom he requires it. That man is the happiest man upon earth who most regulates his passions and desires by the word of God, whose heart is most filled with the emotions which he requires, and who has the testimony of a good conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity he serves the Lord. He who fulfils the first great law of his Almighty Maker, who according to the text, fears the Lord his God, and walks in all his ways, and loves him, and serves the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul, and keeps the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, that man will ever find that it is for his good, yea, for his present and also for his future good. On the other hand man's greatest misery consists in his departing from God, and in having a wrong state of heart towards him, and in living contrary to his righteous law. While his will is opposed to that of God, and his affections are alienated from him, and his life is contrary to God's precepts, he is under the dominion of passions which destroy his peace, and subjected to consequences which cause him

suffering and pain. He grows full of pride, anger, malice, envy, inordinate concupiscence, and evil covetousness; his self-will meets with opposition from men as self-willed as himself; his pride and anger are resisted by others as proud and passionate as he; his malice finds an equal or greater return in their malice; disappointment attends upon his desires; his plans to obtain power and pleasure are frustrated by men as intent upon these things as himself, whom he therefore hates and envies; his hot blood within him is heated more violently; his whole soul is agitated as the waves of the troubled sea in a tempest which cannot rest. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Thus the words of the prophet Isaiah are found to be true, "Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

In prosecuting this subject, as it relates to

man's duty and happiness, I will endeavour to shew you, First, that God has a right to require all that he here requires, and secondly, that the rendering of that which he requires will be for your good.

I. I begin by shewing that God has a right to require all that he here requires in the text. What is it that God requires? The words are, "to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes." Here you may perceive that God requires the best affections of your hearts and the faithful service of your lives. Here you see the first and great commandment of his law, and the first and great duty of man. We have many duties to perform to our fellow creatures. But our duty to God takes precedence of them all. Human laws necessarily take cognizance principally of the former: but the divine law has its regard directed to the latter. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, and thou shalt do unto all men as thou wouldest that

they should do unto thee, are commandments which contain the principle of all our moral duties to our fellow men. But thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind and with all thy heart and with all thy strength comes before these : it lays the foundation of them : it is the root which produces them : it is itself the first commandment of all, and the spring from which all our secondary duties flow. It is first in order, first in honour, first in operation on the human heart, and first in the regulation of the whole life.

Now God has a right to require this from his creatures. This, I have said, is the first doctrine of the text. God has a right to require their love and service, yea, that they should be wholly his, and yield both the internal faculties, powers, and emotions of the soul to him, and the external obedience and service of their bodies. What is the origin of this right ? From whence arises the authority ? I do not suppose that any of you would ask these questions because you deny the right, or because you are ignorant of the foundation of it. But I put forth this inquiry

that you may deeply consider the claim which God makes upon you. I want to bring you to a close examination of his right to make it. In fact, I want even more than this. I want you not merely to acknowledge his claim, and allow his right, but to carry out this knowledge and acknowledgment into a practical actual fulfilment of all that he requires.

1. Consider then that this right of God to make the requirement of the text arises from the pleasure of his will and the exertion of his power to *create* you. He made you what you are. Out of the dust of the earth of which you were formed, he might have made a stone or a tree, a beast or a reptile, an idiot or a maniac, one blind or deaf and dumb. But he has formed all the limbs of your body and given them the powers which they possess. He has bestowed upon you the various senses which belong to the human frame. He has given you all the faculties of a rational soul, and the sensibilities of a feeling heart. Tell me what you have made for yourselves. Did you make a

finger or a nail, or even a hair of your head? Did you form the organs of speech, or the tympanum of the ear, or the lenses of the eye? Did you fashion the texture of the brain which evolves the curious thought, the fine powers of imagination, and the orderly deductions of reason? Or did you throw into the heart, having yourself first taught it to beat, and made the blood pass through it, I say, did you then throw into it those exquisite sensibilities by which it experiences pleasure, feels the sweet influence of the natural affections and delights, when it is renewed in the love of God? No. You made none of these things. God originated, created, put together, and poured into you, one and all of them. Put all these enquiries into one question. Can you produce life? You may form an image; you can carve it in wood; you can mould it in plaster; you can sculpture it in marble; you can paint it on canvas, but can you give it *life*. No. Utterly absolutely hopeless would be the attempt. You know that you cannot even approach to it, and therefore you never even make the

trial. *God* breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and *thus* man became a living soul. He who alone has life in himself, alone has power to confer that wondrous gift on others. Then if God has given life, if he has formed the body with all its curious parts and all their admirable powers, if he has placed in it the thinking, reasoning, imagining, feeling soul, he has a right to all that he has made. He has a just claim upon every power and faculty, every thought and act, every imagination and emotion. This is the first and original foundation of the right through which God makes the requirement in the text, and demands the whole love and service of all his rational creatures. It is universal, eternal, and unalterable, because it is founded on an act which extends to all, of which the effect will endure for ever, which originated wholly in his own good pleasure, and was perfected entirely by his own almighty power.

2. I need not now go on to the preservation of life, and the provision made for its support and comfort, to the bounties of his

providence, and his government of the world, although these also are additional supports upon which the requirement rests. Because I have but little time I pass to higher and nobler things. I am going, and I wish to take you with me, to a contemplation of the mercies of *redemption*. Oh! there is a word, full of claim, full of motive, full of power and grace, full of love and mercy. Redemption so far as man's existence is concerned, comes second in order of time, but who will say that it is second in importance, in its influence on our eternal destinies, or in its operation on our affections? Who will say that the thought of redeeming love has less of power, as a motive to produce the fulfilment of all that is required, than the consideration of creating power and goodness? I say that it has more; and in this I am borne out by the inspired word of him, from whom I take all my doctrines and principles of persuasion. Let us go then together to a consideration of this part of the subject.

Mankind, created by the word, and in the image of God, fell in the person and by the

disobedience of their first progenitor, lost the divine image, and became exposed to the wrath of God. In these circumstances what did the mighty Creator do? Did he cut them off at one blow? Did he consign them to everlasting punishment? This he might have done, and none would have had a right to impugn his justice, or say, "What doest thou?" But he acted not thus. He prepared a method of recovery, a remedy for the unhappy case, a ransom for a captured world. After a due course of preparation he sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved by him. Jesus, the Saviour, came to seek and to save that which was lost. For this purpose he took a human nature. In it he endured the vengeance of heaven, and bore the punishment of man's sin. By unparalleled sufferings and also by unremitted and perfect obedience he procured the pardon of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. He effected our peace and acceptance. See here then the love of God. God so loved us, that he gave his Son, and freely delivered

him up to death for us. Christ so loved us, that he willingly suffered death, even the death of the cross for us. Now what says the Apostle on this? He says, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." He says again, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and in the spirits which are God's." This is the very thing required in the text, and I say again, that redemption has in it a more powerful motive to make us give ourselves wholly to God, and to be his without reserve, to love him and to serve him, than the act of creation, or the care of providence. It increases the claim of God upon us in an immense ratio. I take in the whole plan and work of redemption. The incarnation of the Son of God, his fulfilment of the whole law, his sacrifice upon the cross, the gift of the Holy Spirit, his enlightening, sanctifying,

and renewing influences. All these form the stupendous work, the amazing grace of man's redemption. What a right has God to the utmost of the heart, mind, soul, and body of the creature, which he has thus redeemed. Take the two together, Creation with all its concomitant blessings of preservation and providence, Redemption with all its glorious effects and consequences, its deliverance from wretchedness, sin, and hell, its restoration to the image and favour of God, its completion in the infinite and eternal glory and happiness of heaven. I ask thee, O man, whether the Lord thy God has not a right to "require of thee to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes which he has commanded thee."

II. I proceed to the second head of this sermon, and to shew you that the rendering unto God of that which he requires will be "for your good." It is impossible that any one should love and serve God without being

benefited by it. The whole scheme of the national prosperity of the Jews went upon this principle, and every nation and kingdom will find that in proportion as it makes a public recognition of the Lord and his service, as it honours his sabbaths, enforces his commandments, and promotes his glory, it will be protected, prosperous, and happy. “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” I shall speak however more particularly of the good which will flow to individuals when they really give themselves to God, as children to love him and servants to obey him. *How* will this be “for their good?” What is the nature of this good? wherein does it consist? It is spiritual good, and arises out of spiritual blessings. It consists in the presence of the Spirit of God with the soul, and in the gracious operations which he carries on within it. His divine influence subdues man’s rebellious will, and makes him patient and contented in suffering. It controls his passions, moderates his desires, softens all his asperities, and sweetens his temper. It thus

cuts off the main sources of irritation and torment. It leaves little to agitate or disturb his peace. Moreover, he who loves God and serves him with all his heart and all his soul, has the testimony of a good conscience within him; he has satisfactory evidence of a gracious change. Hence he has the spirit of adoption in his heart. He walks in the light of God's countenance. He has peace and joy in believing. He joys in God, and rejoices in hope of his glory. Oh! brethren these are happy experiences, the sweetest emotions which the heart of man can feel. I add, that the favour of God, his love, his protection, his mercy, grace, and salvation, are all promised and all given to those who love him and walk in his ways. They have the pardon of all their sins; they are justified freely; they are made children of God by adoption into his family, and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Oh! what abundance and variety of good in spiritual blessings and privileges do they enjoy who fulfil the requirements which God makes of them as his formed and

redeemed creatures ! Oh ! surely, it is for their good, even in this present life, that they love the Lord and serve him with all their heart and with all their soul.

But there is more and greater good to come. There is another life. There is a heaven, which in all its enjoyments and privileges is as superior to every thing which can be possessed now, as itself is high above the earth. There is a perfect freedom from every feeling of sorrow or pain. There is a perfect deliverance from every taint and emotion of sin. There will be an unclouded vision of the infinitely holy, and blessed God, a full knowledge of all his perfections, works, and dispensations. There will be uninterrupted communion with that merciful Saviour, whom here, having not seen, they love. There will be a spirit made perfect. There will be a body fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. Do you ask then, "who will shew us any good?" Here it is, in heaven. Here it is, on earth. Do you ask, how you are to obtain it? We answer with the text, "Fear the Lord thy God, walk in all his ways, love him,

and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes," and this will secure for thee the possession of all this good on earth and in heaven. Be brought to this feeling of heart and this service of life through the powerful motives of the Father's creating power and the Son's redeeming love, and through the divine operation of the Spirit's mighty grace, and then not one thing shall fail of all the good which the Lord has promised to give you.

The text consists of an interrogation, and my application of the subject shall take that form. I ask you then, has not God a right to be thus loved and served? And is it not reasonable that you should be his willing, grateful, affectionate, and obedient servants? Are not the mercies of creation and redemption sufficient to require this at your hands? Ought you to have any other Lords but him? Ought you to be the servants of sin, the votaries of the world, the subjects of Satan? Ought you to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? Ought there to be any

person or thing in heaven above or earth beneath that should have a preference in your heart, and occupy more of your time, thought, and actions, than he? Can there be a more powerful claim than that which the Lord God makes of you? Is it not right and most reasonable that he should require of you what he does? Then is it not base and vile on your part that you have not fulfilled it? that you have not loved the Lord, nor walked in his ways, nor served him with all your heart and with all your soul? And should you not now at length return to him, and give him the remainder of your lives, and the best of all that you can yet do for him? . Is not the time past sufficient for you to have lived in opposition to his law, and should not the whole of the time to come be faithfully devoted to his service?

I ask you also, would not this be for your good? Would it not tend to promote your happiness? Would it not make your mind more peaceful, and give you more comfort and satisfaction than you have yet found? Would you not thus get an approving conscience?

Would you not thus feel a lively hope? Would not the remainder of life pass with more real content and pleasure than you have hitherto experienced?—But would it not tend to save your soul? What say you in answer to that question? Oh! Brethren, put all these interrogatories to your own consciences. Think on them with deep and serious regard. I say to you solemnly, with the deepest conviction of its truth, and the most affectionate solicitude for your welfare, that it is your bounden duty, and will be for your present and eternal good, if you fulfil the requirement of this text, and give yourselves wholly to the Lord.

SERMON XVIII.

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.

DEUT. XI. 26—29.

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse ; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God has brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal.

THE faithful adherence of Israel to the service of that God who had chosen them out

of all other nations to be a peculiar people to himself, was required of them by most powerful considerations, and the observance of the law which he had given them was secured by extraordinary promises and blessings. Various institutions were also appointed for the same purpose ; and that of which the text speaks is a very remarkable one. There is a fuller account of it in the twenty-seventh chapter, where we find that six of the tribes were to stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people, and the other six upon Mount Ebal to curse, and that the Levites were to pronounce the curses with a loud voice in the hearing of all the people, and to each separate curse as soon as it was thus pronounced, all the people were to answer, Amen ; thus giving their full assent to the justice and excellence of every precept, commandment, and statute, acknowledging that the curse would be justly deserved by any and every transgression, and confirming that position respecting the law which St. Paul afterwards laid down so authoritatively and clearly, “ Cursed is he that continueth

not in all things which are written in the law to do them." Further on in the history of this people we find, that one of the first acts of Joshua, after he had successfully brought them into the possession of the land which had been promised them, was the observance of this ceremony. In the eighth chapter of the book which bears his name, and the thirtieth verse, we read, that Joshua built an altar unto the Lord in Mount Ebal, an altar of whole stones, and wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses in the presence of the children of Israel, and that half the people stood over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterwards he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings according to all that is written in the book of the law. And no doubt the people at the same time confirmed all these words of the law, and signified their assent, and their approbation of them, by solemnly pronouncing

the word Amen, as Moses had also commanded.

Now this was the dispensation under which the Israelites were placed as a nation. They had promises of great temporal blessings so long as they continued firm in the worship and service of Jehovah, and threatenings of tremendous temporal calamities, if they forsook him. And these blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience you will find stated with great minuteness in the twenty-eighth chapter of this book of Deuteronomy.

The whole history of the Jewish nation is but the history of the fulfilment of these blessings and curses. Prosperity beyond example, and almost beyond credibility, followed them whenever they faithfully worshipped the Lord, and kept his law. In war they were ever triumphant. No enemies, however numerous, or brave, could stand before them. It seemed indeed as if one could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. The increase of their population was astonishingly rapid, and the fertility of their small and mountainous country was almost

incredible. And when from time to time things were reversed on account of their frequent departures from God, yet ever on their return to him with penitence and prayer, the whole of their prosperity was speedily renewed.

On the other hand the threatened judgments fell upon them whenever they cast off the service of the Lord. Then came his curses, as the mouth of the Lord had spoken. This is observable in all periods of their history. It is very manifest in the reigns of Manasseh, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, when their defection had become greater and more general. Then indeed they were terribly afflicted and brought low, pillaged, and carried away captive. And when in after-ages the measure of their iniquity was full, and they had heaped it up to running over by the crucifixion of the Son of God, then indeed there came on them all the curses which are written in this book, and more also. There is nothing however dreadful to relate or harrowing to human feeling to think of which they did not suffer during the last siege of

Jerusalem from their own dissensions within and the army of the Romans without; all the worst calamities which had so long before been denounced against their rejection of God, in the twenty-eighth chapter of this book, were then poured out upon them to the very letter, yea even that which is written at the fifty-sixth verse, "The tender and delicate woman among you which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil towards the husband of her bosom, and towards her son, and towards her daughter, and towards her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and towards her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the seige and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates." These, and other such horrible things did actually occur in those days, in which they had "great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world unto that time, no, nor ever shall be again." For that rejection of God the Son, who in

the early days of the nation had appeared to them as the angel of the Lord and of the covenant, and then came to them in the likeness of man, of their own nation, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh ; for that rejection of the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Mediator of the new covenant, they were driven out of the land, their numbers were diminished, they were scattered over the face of the earth ; and those curses remain upon them unto this day, and will remain, until God shall take away the veil that is spread over their heart, and it, that is their heart, shall turn unto the Lord. A curse fell also on their land. Its fertility was turned into barrenness. That fertility had been occasioned by the peculiar blessing of God ; and that being forfeited by their defection from him, barrenness came over it in consequence of his curse, as the Lord had said, "I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass, and your strength shall be spent in vain : for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits."

The wonder of the surrounding nations at this extraordinary change is emphatically noticed in the twenty-ninth chapter of this book. But the solution is given in answer to all such surprise, doubt, or inquiry, "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them. Thus the whole history of the Jewish nation affords proof of the most complete fulfilment of the word of God, and offers to us a striking display of his blessing, and his curse. It tells us in language which cannot be misunderstood that "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

In the dispensation of the gospel under which we live there are no such peculiar arrangements of Providence as in that under which the Jews were placed. Our regard to God and his service is to be drawn from higher motives. Obedience and disobedience

are now to be considered as they have influence on our state in a future world, or our *spiritual* blessings in the present life. And verily those blessings are such as fully to justify our application of even an Old Testament proverb, and to declare that religion's "ways are ways of pleasantness and her paths are paths of peace." And if we are not content with this we may quote the New Testament, and say that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." Still the principle and motive of all action now under the gospel must have regard to "the day of revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will then render to every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, but glory honour and peace to every man that worketh good." Yes

verily we are to look especially to that day in which "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

The blessings which the Lord gives unto his people in this world are preparatory for that great day, and in their nature similar to those blessings which shall hereafter be enjoyed by them in the presence of God. They all are however to be spoken of under the supposition of our having an interest in Christ. Among them is the pardon of sin, yea, a most full and free forgiveness of all iniquity, a perfect blotting out of all recorded transgressions, and a removal of condemnation. What blessing is more needed by a sinful creature? What is there for which his convinced soul more longeth, or in the

assurance of which it more rejoiceth. There is also the blessing of a renewed heart. The natural heart of man is depraved and desperately wicked : it is alienated from God, and opposed to his holiness. In such a state it cannot love him or delight in him, nor could find any pleasure even in his presence in heaven. What a blessing then to have the heart renewed in holiness, so as to be capable of loving him above all things, and of rejoicing in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory ! I undertake to say that the soul of man never feels so truly blessed on earth as when it is most conscious that the love of God is shed abroad upon it by the Holy Ghost, and when it thereby approaches the nearest to the fulfilment of the first and great commandment of his law. There are also the blessings of present reconciliation and peace with God, and hope of his glory. And what content and satisfaction and patience do these produce. How do they help us to support the necessary ills of life, and bear us up above them ! How do they sweeten every present earthly joy and

comfort, soothing in adversity and chastening in prosperity, and rendering every thing to us what it ought to be. There is also the blessing of God's watchful care and preservation. And oh ! what a blessing is this in this world of sin and temptation, with such evil hearts as we naturally possess, and with such a powerful and subtle enemy as we have to deal ! How rich in encouragement is the assurance, " I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," " My grace is sufficient for thee and my strength is made perfect in weakness." What power of strength and confidence to keep the mind at peace is conveyed by the promise that God will " bruise Satan" under the feet of his people, and " preserve them from every evil work unto his heavenly kingdom !"

These are present blessings, and when they are all completed and have been enjoyed on earth, there is the blessing of eternal life in the very presence of God himself in the heaven where he dwelleth. Oh ! who can imagine the blessings of that state, perfect holiness and perfect happiness pervading

every glorified spirit, and reigning with them during all eternity. Oh! when God has blessed that soul of man, which has experienced his love upon earth, with the full fruition of himself in heaven, what unspeakable and inconceivable bliss will it then enjoy! This greatest and best of all blessings is reserved for those who have received the salvation of his Son Jesus Christ. This is the heritage of the people of Christ the portion of his saints.

The curses which are threatened to the ungodly the impenitent and unbelieving, and which most assuredly will fall upon them, except they repent and believe the gospel, are in like manner curses of a spiritual nature. True it is that sin has many a heavy penalty attached to it even in temporal things; and loss of substance and character, loss of health and peace, loss of temper and comfort, continually attend upon it, so that "the way of transgressors is hard," and "fools, because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." These curses however are *not always* the

inseparable attendants on vice. But there are curses which may ever be expected to fall upon the devoted heads of the wicked. There is the withholding or the withdrawing of the Spirit of God. That is the greatest curse which a man can have upon earth. Where he no longer strives in the soul, absolute carelessness, indifference, hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word, prevails. Sin is continued in, often increased to an enormous extent, without compunction or remorse. All the interests, nay the very being of the soul, are forgotten or disregarded. Men live without God in the world. All their thoughts, views, projects, motives, objects, arise out of the world, and return to it again. God is not in all their thoughts. Eternity is lost sight of. Heaven and hell are disregarded. Where the Spirit of God strives not, man makes himself an outcast from all the mercy and favour of God, from all the principles and motives of good, and gives himself up to the world, to sin, and to Satan. Is it possible that there can be a greater curse than this?

Yes, there is still a greater curse than this, that curse to which it is preparatory; the curse of God upon the soul in the eternal world. It is thus pronounced, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget God." It is thus spoken of, "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." To that condition, above all others, the words of the book of Revelation will be applicable, for there they will "Gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repent not of their deeds." Oh! who can endure that outpouring of the wrath of God? "Who can dwell with that flame? Who can lie down in those everlasting burnings?" We love not to describe that curse and all its misery. Nothing but the strongest necessity induces us to speak of it. Nothing but the fearful danger lest you should suffer it. And God loves not to inflict it. He swears by himself that he does not. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his evil way and

live.” “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” Oh! who will madly fly in the face of God’s wrath, and as it were compel him, though unwilling, to execute it? Who will obstinately plunge himself into that eternal wretchedness and misery which the Devils suffer? Who will wilfully heap upon his own head all of that curse which Jesus died to remove? Pause, my beloved hearers, pause in the midst of your destructive course. Pause, I intreat you, ere the final judgment of the great God fall upon you, and you sink into perdition under the weight of his irreversible sentence.

That if possible a stronger impression may be made upon you through the grace of the Holy Ghost, let us, in conclusion, return again to the contemplation of this awful solemnity of the Mosaic dispensation. Think of the people all assembled together on those two mounts, the mount Gerizim and the mount Ebal. See the whole congregation thus standing before the Lord. Hear the priest with a loud voice pronouncing in the hearing of them all the blessing and the curse

of the law of God. Listen to that solemn Amen with which the people confirmed all the words of that law, and expressed their full sense and acknowledgment of the justice of the curse which it pronounced against transgressors. And then think that there is yet to come another day more awful even than that, another solemnity more full both of transporting joy and sickening terror. Read the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel. There you will find that all nations will be gathered before the Son of Man when he appears in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; that as the different tribes of Israel stood on the two separate mountains, so these will be placed, some on his right hand and some on his left; that then the blessing will be pronounced to those on his right hand in these terms, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and the curse will be pronounced on those on his left hand in these terms, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." Yes, Brethren,

and remember that while the blessing and the curse were spoken to Israel as warnings, this blessing and this curse will be pronounced as the final doom; for these last "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Oh! how the heart of those who shall receive the blessing will leap with joy within them, as they follow their Saviour into everlasting bliss. Oh! how the hearts of those who shall receive the curse will turn cold as ice with terror and horror, as they are driven into the black and fiery abodes of an eternal hell! Oh! how a well grounded anticipation of the blessing may now sustain and rejoice the soul of the pardoned sinner, and faithful servant of the Lord! And oh! how the fearful expectation of the curse must dismay the soul of him who is conscious that it still rests upon him! I say to you, my present hearers, as Moses to the Israelites, "See, I have set before you this day life and death, and good and evil. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore

choose life, that ye may live.” The curse of the law has been borne by Jesus Christ in his own body on the tree in behalf of all who believe in and obey him. *Then* “he has redeemed from the curse of the law, being made a curse in their stead.” The unbelieving and disobedient can have no part in his sacrifice and atonement. They are still of the works of the law and are under its curse. Oh! then turn all of you to him who removes the curse and gives the blessing, that you may live and not die eternally.

SERMON XIX.

ONE PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR THE JEWS.

DEUT. XII. 5.

Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come.

No one duty which man has to perform in his social state is of more importance than that of public worship. All his primary duties indeed are those which he owes to God. His first duty as an individual is to "love the Lord his God with all his heart and all his mind and all his soul and all his strength." His first duty as the master of a house is to set up a family altar in it, to rule his household for God, and to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. His first duty as the

member of a community is to join with his fellow men in the public worship of the Lord of all, and to testify thus, in the view of others, the deep regard which he has to the divine Being, and the obligations under which he lies to render him both honour and service.

The fulfilment of this duty was enjoined, and provision made for its performance, under the Mosaic dispensation. The first recognition of it had been by the appointment of the Sabbath. In the wilderness Moses was directed to build the tabernacle, where alone their offerings were to be made, and their solemn services performed; and upon their permanent establishment in the land of Canaan, their worship was to have one permanently fixed place, as is enjoined in the text, and again in the tenth verse. Accordingly as soon as the Israelites were settled in Canaan under the conduct of Joshua, they set up the tabernacle in Shiloh, where it continued through all the time of the Judges and the reign of Saul, till it was removed by David to Jerusalem, and finally

replaced by the magnificent temple which he projected, and which was afterwards built by his son Solomon. In that one house alone, the public national worship of the Israelites was appointed to be offered. There the morning and evening sacrifices, the peace-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, and all the other offerings were presented. There the priests officiated daily according to their courses. Thither all the people were to come annually at their solemn festivals. In that one place all the public religious services were performed. And even when the Israelites worshipped in their own cities, or went out unto war, or were carried captive into foreign lands, or were on any account far from the temple, they were directed and accustomed to look towards Jerusalem and the temple there, and so to make their prayers and supplications, as may be seen from the prayer of Solomon, in the first book of Kings, and in the example of Daniel and Jonah.

It was a remarkable appointment, that there should thus be one stated place, at

which alone the public worship of the Israelites were enjoined. But theirs was most strictly a national religion, and this ordinance helped to bind them more strongly together. David celebrates the city on this account in the hundred and twenty-second Psalm, saying, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together," or, as the older translation has it, "that is at unity in itself," "whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." This appointment served also to mark the Israelites as the worshippers of one God, which was the great distinction between them and the surrounding heathen. These idolaters worshipped their many Gods on every high place, and under every green tree, which they chose, and it was to prevent this, and thereby to withdraw them effectually from sacrificing to idols that God required their worship at the temple alone. You will perceive from the context, and from the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, and from several other places, that such was one principal object of this appointment, and

hence the strict command, "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee." Thus a very striking difference was made between the worship of Jehovah, the one true and only God, and that of all the false Gods of the heathen.

This appointment of God was broken in upon after the death of Solomon, by the policy of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, refused to redress some grievances of which the people complained, and spake roughly to them, and threatened them with yet greater severity. In consequence thereof, ten of the tribes revolted from him, and set up for themselves a separate kingdom under Jeroboam, who had been their leader in the affair. This kingdom is henceforth designated in scripture as the kingdom of Israel, while that which remained under the sceptre of the family of David, is known as the kingdom of

Judah. Jeroboam soon perceived that the unity of worship at Jerusalem would prove a great hindrance to his project of dividing the kingdom, and that his power would be insecure so long as the religion of the people continued to be established there. He therefore caused a great national schism in religion to uphold the separation of the state. We read thus in the twelfth chapter of the first book of Kings and the twenty-sixth verse, "And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David ; if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, King of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam King of Judah. Wherefore, the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem ; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other in Dan." In these two places therefore did Jeroboam, from motives

of earthly policy, establish the worship of Israel. At these he "made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi," and at these he built altars, ordained feasts, burnt incense, and offered sacrifice. Thus the order of worship which the Lord had appointed was overthrown; the ten tribes were led into the worship of images, directly contrary to the second commandment; to a departure from the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and from the order of the priesthood which he had specially given to the tribe of Levi, and hence the whole kingdom of Israel, departing from the place and mode of worship which the Lord had appointed, fell into the idolatries of the heathen, and made themselves other gods and molten images. And for this Jeroboam stands throughout the pages of the sacred writings with one of the blackest marks attached to his name. We find him designated through many succeeding reigns and generations as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." We find most of the succeeding kings, for

all followed his example, marked with his brand; for it is commonly recorded of them, that "they departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." And when the kingdom was finally subverted by Shalmanezzer the king of Assyria, and the inhabitants were forcibly taken out of it, and placed in various parts of Assyria, and in Habab and Habor, and the cities of the Medes, these are the terms in which we read of it, "The Lord rejected the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by the mouth of all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria." Oh! it is therefore a

grievous thing when a nation departs from the true worship of the Lord. And infamous for ever will be the name of that individual who leads them away.

This schism of the Israelites, and the consequent difference between their places of worship, gave rise, in the times of the gospel, to an interesting conversation between our blessed Lord and a woman of Samaria. The Samaritans, as they are uniformly termed in the New Testament, were the descendants of that mixture of the Israelites who were left in the land by Shalmanezzer, and the Assyrians who were brought into it, in place of those whom he had removed from it, and their religion appears to have long partaken of a mixed character, which is thus described, "They feared the Lord and served their gods." Again, "So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children." In process of time however they renounced the worship of idols, and gradually approximated to a similarity with the worship of the Jews. About four hundred years before the

time of our Lord they built a temple on mount Gerizim, in imitation of, but in opposition to, that at Jerusalem, and there they maintained a kind of schismatical worship with the rejection of a great part of the scriptures, probably those which so expressly enjoined, like the text, that they should worship only at Jerusalem.

Now this point was a matter of great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans; and the woman whom I have mentioned, made it a matter of inquiry of our Lord, as we read in the fourth chapter of St. John's gospel. "Sir," she says, "I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The divine teacher plainly intimated to her that the Samaritans had departed from the appointment of God. He said to her, "*Ye* worship ye know not what ye worship: *we* know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews." But he instructed her further that these peculiarities of the Jews' religion were about to cease, and that they

also were no longer to confine their worship to the mount on which their temple was erected. He saith to her, "Woman, believe me the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." That is, God will no longer be worshipped in one place only, whether that place be on Mount Gerizim or Mount Zion; his worship will no longer be exclusively restricted to this place or that, nor enjoyed by this or that people solely. He shows her moreover what was henceforth to be the real nature of acceptable worship, saying to her, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Here is plainly set forth the breaking down of that great middle wall of partition which had so long separated the Gentile from the Jew. Here is the extension of grace and mercy from the previously chosen land to the whole world. Peace is now preached

“to those who were afar off,” as well as to “them that were nigh.” Now began to be unfolded that “mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was afterwards revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the spirit, that the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel.” And in this new dispensation, in which all nations were to be gathered together into one church under Christ, as sheep into one fold under one shepherd, the spirit and inward emotions and devotion of the soul would be more regarded than the place or the manner of worship.

Yet let it not be supposed that Jesus abrogated the great duty of public worship. The sacrifices of the Jewish law, its festivals, its ceremonies, and peculiar observances, were all about to be abolished, as well as that hitherto positive restriction which we have been considering; but the fundamental law of divine worship, founded upon man’s natural relation to God, still remains in full

force. This duty was constantly observed by Christ himself, both in the temple and the synagogue. It was observed by his early followers who met together in one place with one accord on the Lord's day. The duty has been acknowledged and observed by the Christian church through all ages, and great has been the blessing of the appointment to thousands and millions. In the services of public worship sinners have been converted and saints established, enquirers have been directed, sceptics have been convinced, the young have been instructed, the weak strengthened, and mourners comforted. Often has God come down by his Spirit into the hearts of those who have been worshipping before him, supplied their wants and desires, and filled their souls with joy and gladness. For the orderly fulfilment of this duty churches are erected, and solemnly set apart for the sacred purpose. Not one vast temple now appears in any Christian land, whither all are to assemble; but these houses of God are scattered through the length and breadth of it for the convenience and easy access and

accommodation of the people. Still the devout worshipper finds that it is good for him to go to the house of the Lord. Still he says, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Alas that there should be so many who absent themselves from the services of public worship! Alas that there should be numbers who attend on them partially! And alas that several, even of those who attend on them constantly, should be careless or dissipated in mind, have their thoughts wandering, or if fixed, fixed on objects far different from those which ought to engage their attention! Oh! that these words of our divine master to the Samaritan woman were impressed on all our minds. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Let then our brief application of this sermon regard these two points. First, Be constant in your attendance on public worship. It is one of the first duties which you owe to God. It is one of those ordinances from which you may derive the greatest benefit to yourselves. It is one of those employments which, rightly conducted, will afford you the greatest pleasure. God is honoured by such observance. You thus testify your regard to him, and shew to others that you feel an obligation to avow the Lord to be your God. Oh ! let it be seen by your constant attendance on the services of his house, that you acknowledge him as the great Creator, the merciful Preserver, the gracious Redeemer and Sanctifier, in whom you live and move and have your being, and that he deserves the adoration of all his rational creatures. What enlarged views of his goodness, what increasing spirituality of heart, what nearer resemblance to his own divine likeness, what additional motives and ability for the practice of all holiness and goodness, may you not thereby obtain ? And oh ! what peace of mind,

what soothing of the spirit, what calming of temper what heavenly communion, what spiritual joys, what anticipations of future glory, may you not thus enjoy? Surely you will often have cause to say, when seated in his house, "It is good to be here. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Surely when you go from it you will find your spirit elevated to high and holy things, your feelings improved, and your whole soul confirmed and strengthened in all goodness.

Secondly, be careful to worship in spirit and in truth. Bring the whole man to the worship of God, the inward mind as well as the outward frame, the spiritual soul as well as the material body, else the latter will be no better than a dead carcass. For this very serious, important, and delightful duty call upon your soul and all that is within you. Engage in it the powers of thought, and the feelings of the heart, offer your worship with the utmost sincerity of intention and uprightness of purpose. Let formality and hypocrisy be both banished. Fear the Lord's reproach

that “This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Oh! worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. And forget not that although the bodily presence is indispensable, the faculties of attention and thought with the emotions of reverence gratitude and love, are equally required; that although the material building be rightly named the house of God, yet his real temple is in all space, and his best residence for us at least is in man himself. “Know ye not,” saith the Apostle to the Corinthians, that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you.” Again, “What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.” And again, “Ye are the temple of the living God, as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.” Oh! desire that he may meet you in that house, and dwell in that temple, and that you may be built upon Christ “For an habitation of God through the spirit.”

SERMON XX.

THE OFFICE OF THE LEVITES.

DEUT. XII. 19.

Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

THE last of these expository sermons was upon the important subject of public worship. This is on one very nearly connected with it, the orders and offices of its officiating ministers. In this respect the Jewish Law was very peculiar. The office of its High Priest and Priests was restricted to the family of Aaron; and “no stranger, which was not of the seed of Aaron,” was permitted to “come near to offer incense before the Lord.” The whole tribe of Levi was also selected to be constantly employed in the service of God. They were taken instead of the first-born of all the other tribes, as we have seen in a

previous exposition, and set apart for God in a solemn service of consecration, in which "Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord," "that they might execute the service of the Lord."

The following appears to me to be the best order in which I can set before you this subject of the officiating ministers of religion under the Jewish Law. I will enquire First, into their offices; Secondly, into their maintenance; and Thirdly, into their claims. And when I have gone through these heads, I will enquire, in a similar manner, into the offices, maintenance, and claims of the ministers of religion under the Gospel.

I. In enquiring into their offices, I will begin with that of the High Priest. The High Priest was the head of the whole ecclesiastical polity of the Jews. His office was of the greatest dignity and authority. He was consecrated, as we saw in a previous sermon, with solemn and very peculiar ceremonies, and anointed with a precious ointment made and kept for that purpose alone. He performed all the highest offices of their religion.

He only might officiate in the Holy of Holies. On him devolved the ceremonies of their principal annual solemnity, the great day of expiation. He alone received the divine communications by means of the Urim and Thummim in his breast plate, and made them known to the people. He was the final judge in all controversies, and whatever was of the first importance to be performed or decided upon, he was the person to whom the performance and the decision belonged.

Next to him, in office and authority, were the Priests. They were chosen to do most of the holy work of God, and were to be without blemish or defect in body, and holy in life. Their office was to perform in turns or courses, the daily and other services of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple. It was their duty to offer the sacrifices; to keep up the fire, which originally fell from heaven, constantly burning day and night on the golden altar; to place on the golden table a censer of incense, lighted with no other fire, every morning and evening; to prepare the twelve loaves of shew bread, and

set them on the altar, changing them every Sabbath ; and in short, to perform the whole of the proper ecclesiastical service of the house of the Lord, except those peculiar parts of it which were restricted to the office of the High Priest. It was their part also to be judges of the leprosy and other ceremonial uncleannesses, and to exclude the persons afflicted with them from the congregation, and to re-admit them to its privileges on their recovery. They were also the ordinary judges of all controversies among the people, “between blood and blood, plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke ;” they were to declare the law, and pronounce its sentence. They were also interpreters of the law, and instructors of the people. They were to “teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by the hand of Moses ;” the “Priest’s lips” were to “keep knowledge ;” and the people were to “seek the law at his mouth.” And finally, they were to praise the Lord, and to pray to him, and to bless the people, in their solemn religious assemblies.

The rest of the tribe of Levi were also devoted to the service of the Lord, and the ministry of his house, but in an inferior capacity. They were to be assistants to the Priests, and to perform the lower offices. Thus speaks the Lord, "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation." They were at first divided into the three families of Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites, but afterwards into four classes. While the Israelites sojourned in the wilderness it was their business to carry the various parts of the tabernacle, whenever the pillar and the cloud directed its removal. They were to set it up when it was to remain stationary, to encamp around it on three sides, while the Priests occupied the fourth, so long as it continued in one place, and to take it down when again it was to remove, some of the more particular parts of the furniture and utensils being carefully covered up by Aaron and the Priests. Afterwards they were employed, by

courses, about the temple and its services, not being permitted to offer sacrifice or burn incense, but assisting the Priests in these and their various other offices. They united also with the Priests in singing the praises of God, and such of them as were not immediately employed at the temple, were instructors of the people in the law and its ordinances.

II. Such were the offices of the three ranks into which the ministers of religion were divided under the Mosaic law. I now proceed, in the second place, to enquire into the provision which was made for their maintenance.

I begin with the provision made for the Levites. By the direction of Moses residences were provided for them. The tribe of Levi had no separate portion assigned to it in the land of Canaan, as had each of the others. As they were to be the ministers and instructors of the people in their religious duties, it was necessary that they should be dispersed among them. Therefore instead of any particular allotment of land forty eight cities were given them to live in, situated in

all the different tribes. The suburbs around these, of the space of six thousand cubits in diameter, were also apportioned to them for their out buildings and pasturage. As they were an order of men for the spiritual good of their brethren, "given to them as a gift for the Lord," they were supported out of the property of their brethren. The tithe, or tenth part, of all the cattle, corn, and fruit, was appropriated by the law of God as a part of their subsistence, as we see in the eighteenth chapter of Numbers and the twenty-first verse. This formed the principal part of the maintenance of the Levites.

The provision made for the Priests consisted also, in the first place, of residences. Thirteen, out of the forty-eight Levitical cities, were appropriated to them. They again had a tenth part of the whole tithe given to the Levites. They had also the first-fruits of the produce of the land. God said to Aaron, "All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them which they shall offer to the Lord, them have I given thee." "I have

given them unto thee, and to thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever." Moreover, certain parts of the various prescribed offerings, both burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, and drink-offerings, with portions of the free-will-offerings that the piety of individuals might offer to the Lord, were for the use of the officiating Priests, and in these, as also in the first-fruits, as it seems, the assistant Levites participated. The redemption money also paid for the first-born of men, and of all beasts not appointed to be offered in sacrifice, was a further part of the maintenance of the Priests, who with the Levites, were thus divested of all secular employments and provided for out of the resources of their brethren, for whom they ministered.

It does not clearly appear what was assigned to the High Priest. Some think that a tenth of the tithe given to the Priests, was appropriated to him. No doubt sufficient provision was made for the suitable support of his superior dignity and office.

III. Such, in brief and general terms, appears to have been the maintenance provided

for the ministers of religion by the law of Moses. I now proceed, in the third place, to enquire into their claims.

It is to this part of the subject, as I think, that the text especially refers, and I conceive that when the Lord said, "Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth," the Priests and the High Priest were also included, as being all of the tribe of Levi; and I understand the meaning to be, that the people should take care to give them their dues, to attend their ministrations, and obey their voice.

They had a claim upon the people for their appointed tithes and offerings; and of these, especially the latter, they could not be wholly defrauded, or scantily supplied with them, but the service of God and the sacrifices to him would be proportionately diminished. Therefore the withholding from them their due in these particulars is spoken of in this striking manner by the prophet Malachi. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have

350 THE OFFICE OF THE LEVITES.

we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." 'The same neglect occurred in the days of Nehemiah, and the people were charged by that great reformer with the same guilt. For on his return from Babylon to Jerusalem he says, "I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers and said, why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasures."

With respect to the obedience due to the sentences which they pronounced in judgment, they had the strongest claims upon the people. For God said by Moses, "Thou shalt come unto the Priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire, and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment; and thou shalt do

according to the sentence. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the Priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord, thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die; and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously." In short, with regard to the claim which they had on the people of obedience to their judgment in civil matters and their instructions in ceremonial and religious duties, it might be enjoined on the people, as in the case of the leprosy, "Take heed that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the Priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so shall ye observe to do."

I now proceed to enquire, in a similar manner, and at the same time by way of application, into the offices, maintenance, and claims, of the ministers of religion under the Gospel.

It is evident that three orders of ministers are spoken of in the New Testament, as well as in the Old; the Apostles, Presbyters, and

Deacons. The Apostles had supreme authority, under Christ the great head of all, over all the churches. They superintended the conduct of the other ministers, and admonished and rebuked them when faulty. It was also peculiarly their office to ordain to the ministry. We find moreover that this same office and authority were conferred by them on others who were not originally of their own body, as on Timothy and Titus. The Presbyters or Bishops, for the office is the same as these titles are used in the scripture, were the pastors of separate churches in the various cities and places where churches were planted; and the Deacons were a lower order and assistants to them. After the days of the Apostles, those upon whom they had conferred their own higher authority, were designated by the name of Bishops, and it is a clear and well-known fact that in *all* the first churches these three offices and titles of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, were invariably found; and it is scarcely possible to believe that this could have prevailed *universally*, as it did, if it had not been

appointed, or at least sanctioned, by Apostolic authority.

These orders exist in our own church. To the Bishops belong the superintendence of all the churches in a particular district, called a diocese, assigned to each. They have to take cognizance of the character and conduct of the inferior ministers, and to reprove, correct, and punish, whatever is wrong in them. They also alone have the power to ordain to any of the sacred offices,—yet in this they are assisted by the laying on of the hands of Presbyters. The Priests have the charge of some one particular church or congregation, where they are to direct and lead the worship of the people, to preach the word of Christ, to administer the sacraments, to visit the sick with their instructions, prayers, and consolations, and perform all other duties belonging to their holy calling. The Deacons have authority to perform most of the same offices, the administration of the sacraments and the declaration of absolution to penitents, being almost the only things to which they are not now admitted, the oversight of a congregation

being sometimes entrusted to them, in the absence of the Priest to whom it properly belongs.—But it is especially the office of all to preach the gospel, and to be instructors of the people in all its doctrines and duties. The most distinguished of even the Apostles said, “Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.” They have therefore to “declare all the counsel of God,” to “make all men see what is the length and breadth, and depth and height of the love of Christ,” and to set forth the gracious operations and influences of the Holy Ghost. It is for them also to state all the practical duties which the gospel requires, and to shew “what manner of persons” men ought to be under it “in all holy conversation and godliness.” And oh! that God may raise up among us many able and faithful ministers in every one of these orders, for the effectual and profitable fulfilment of every part of their duty.

To enable them to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, a maintenance is apportioned to them under the gospel as well

as under the law. No precise and universal law is however prescribed, but we find many notices of the general duty. St. Paul argues on the case of the Levites, and draws a parallel between them and the preachers of the gospel. "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel." Their support is made to rest in one text upon the point of justice. "The labourer is worthy of his hire," and in others on the principle of gratitude, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;" and, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?" The principal provision in this country for the ministers of the Established Church arises from tithes of the produce of the land, which; after the example of the Jewish law, were voluntarily given for this purpose by the piety of individuals, though there is no

command to that effect. The great owners of the land gave the tenth of its productions to the ministers of religion for the glory of God, and for the spiritual services to be rendered by them to themselves, their households, their tenantry and dependants. These constitute the chief endowments of our churches, and besides these there are a few prescribed or customary dues, and voluntary oblations.

The ministers of religion have rightful claims on such maintenance, and neither individuals separately, nor the legislature collectively, can justly deprive them of it. To do this is no better than a robbery of them. Yet let it never be forgotten, on the other hand, that he who receives the emoluments without performing the duties for which they were given, robs the people of that which they have an equal right to demand from him. I also observe that as public instructors in spiritual things, they have especial claims on your attendance on, and attention to, all their ministrations. Whenever they appear publicly to offer up worship

to God, to preach the everlasting gospel, or administer its sacraments, forsake them not, “forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.” Remember that your ministers speak to you on no light things, but on those which concern your everlasting life or death, and that the sacraments are Christ’s ordinances, strictly enjoined on the observance of all his followers. They are ambassadors for God, who treat with you in his name on the most momentous concerns. They are the servants of Christ who minister to you in holy things. Oh! forsake them not. Forsake not their ministrations. Give your constant attendance on them. Give your most serious and prayerful attention to them. Yes, brethren, desire and pray that God may make their ministry profitable to your souls, and by it instruct you, and bring you into a faithful reception of all his great salvation.

SERMON XXI.

CHARITY TO THE POOR.

DEUT. xv. 7.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother.

A VERY necessary and important subject is here brought before you, necessary to be considered in our expositions as a part of the Jewish law, important in its application to both rich and poor in all ages and under all governments. Man's selfish nature hath need of such a direct command as this, for the unrenewed heart is ever wont to overlook or harden itself against the wants and woes of its fellow-creatures. Even when that selfishness is overcome by the grace of divine

love poured into the soul, yet this infection of nature in some degree remaineth ; and there are few warnings to which religious persons should give more attention than such as these, “ Take heed and beware of covetousness.” “ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” There are also few exhortations more necessary for them than the following, “ Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face away from any poor man ;” “ To do good and to distribute forget not ;” “ Remember the poor.”

Moses is hereby giving directions as to what should be the conduct of the Israelites in this particular, when they should be established in Canaan ; and I wish to consider with you on this subject

I. The care which God took for the poor.

II. The care which he took for the rich.

I. In considering the first point, the care which God took for the poor we must notice,

1. The settlement which he thought fit to make of the property of the land, and his laws respecting debts and slavery.

I have already considered these in a former sermon, and therefore shall only give a brief recapitulation of them. The whole land of Canaan was held by the Israelites subject to a singular regulation. No part of it could pass, except for a short time, from one possessor to another. It was to be uniformly kept in the tribe and family to which it was originally allotted. Besides this regulation respecting the land, every seventh year was to give a release from all debts which one Israelite owed to another. The same year gave them liberty from slavery when one Israelite had been sold to another for a debt which he could not pay, or a crime which he had committed, he regained his freedom in the year of release.

And although this law did not apply to slaves that were not of their own nation, yet even in their case there were many very merciful enactments respecting them, widely differing from the cruelties exercised over them by other nations, and even by the Greeks and Romans afterwards in their highest state of civilization.

2. Next let us notice the relief which the Israelites were required to afford when their brethren obtained their release from debt or from slavery. The law respecting debts might seem to operate to the disadvantage of the poor. The rich might be unwilling, especially if the year of release was near, to lend any thing to a distressed brother, as thinking that it would never be repaid. Therefore the Lord says in the ninth verse, "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him." The same liberality was to be shewn to the bondman, when he again returned to his personal freedom. Thus we read in the thirteenth and following verse. "And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty : thou shalt furnish him

liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press : of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him." They were taught to do thus out of gratitude for God's mercy to them in delivering them from their bondage in Egypt, -as we read in the next verse, "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee ; therefore I command thee this thing to-day." Moreover, we find the general principle of giving relief to the poor laid down in Leviticus, the twenty-fifth chapter, and thirty-fifth verse, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him : yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner ; that he may live with thee." All these things shew what care God had over the poor of his people, and how he provided that they should never be reduced to the lowest depths of extreme poverty.

Before I proceed to the next division of my sermon, let me here shew you that the same care is taken for the poor under the

gospel, and in the same way, namely, by liberality to them on the part of the rich. Was it likely, think ye, that God would take less care for the poor under the gospel than under the law? or that less kindness and mercy is to be shewn by a Christian than by a Jew? Beware lest there be any such thought in thy wicked heart. For a Christian, a nominal Christian, may be as hard and churlish, and covetous, as ever was any Jew or Pagan. True we have no such arrangement respecting property in land, no such laws respecting debts, no year of release. But the spirit of Christianity is totally opposed to personal slavery, and the laws of our own country strictly prohibit it, and the precepts of the gospel are numerous and strong, which inculcate liberality to the poor.

Hear the fifth chapter of St. Matthew and the forty-second verse. "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Again, in St. Luke, the sixth chapter and thirty-third verse. "If ye do good to them which

do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend hoping for nothing again." Listen to yet more such precepts, I need not quote the places in which they are found. "Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face away from any poor man." "To do good and to communicate, forget not." Timothy is directed by St. Paul to "charge them who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." Nothing can be plainer or stronger than these texts. They shew the care which God has for the poor. They state the duty of liberality to them under the gospel with the greatest clearness, and enforce it with the utmost authority.

II. I now proceed in my second division

of this subject, to consider the care which God took for the rich. In the text it is said, "Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother." But in the seventh and eighth verses we read more fully. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." In these verses we see both a warning and a promise.

1. A warning. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, the seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother." Again, "Thine heart shall not be *grieved*, when thou givest him." And so in the text, "Thou shalt not harden

thine heart." Now all this looks somewhat like a threat, but it is in reality a mercy, and shews the care which God took that the rich should cultivate those dispositions which became their situation, which would make them resemble him, and give them a meetness for heaven. Riches, through our natural depravity, have a tendency to make their possessors indifferent to the wants of their fellow-creatures, to harden their hearts, and fill them with pride and contempt of those below them, as if they were scarcely of the same species. Therefore God took this care to preserve the wealthy among *his* people from these sins. He would not have them to be selfish persons, who looked only on their own things, and not on the things of others ; nor unfeeling persons, who had no sympathy with their distressed brethren ; nor ungrateful persons, who had no sense of his own kindness towards themselves. But he would have them to be merciful, as their Father in heaven is merciful. And what is more pleasing and delightful to the human heart than to be enabled by his grace to

feel the emotions of benevolence, kindness, and love, and to be also enabled by his providence to gratify these emotions by the exercise of a bounteous liberality ? Or what is so suitable a preparation of the human soul for dwelling in the presence of God, for "God is Love?"

Again, on this warning we read, beware lest thy poor brother "cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." God is a God that "heareth prayer;" and happy are they who may truly say as Job, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor." But there are other cries which enter into the ears of the Lord, besides the prayers and blessings of the poor on their benefactors. There is the cry of murdered blood, as we

have already seen in the case of Cain and Abel, and as we also read in the book of Revelation. There is the cry of defrauded labourers, as St. James warns the rich in his day. Oh! it is a fearful thing that God should hear the complaints of the poor against the injustice of those who oppress them, or the hard-heartedness of those who refuse to relieve them. Surely either of these will be sin unto them, and what can *he* expect but to have judgment without mercy, who shews no mercy. Alas, there are numbers who never think that this is a sin. They think that their wealth is their own, and may be wholly appropriated to their own selfish and sensual indulgencies. But it is a sin, as this scripture declareth, "Beware lest he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." Yes, it is a sin against the poor, who have even natural claims upon the help of their fellow-men; and it is a sin against God, who has given the wealth, and who has made the poor his representatives in this case, and recipients of some of those gifts which

are due to him. Oh ! let every richer Christian fear lest he bring so great a sin upon himself.

2. Here is also a Promise. “Because for this thing the Lord shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.” I have often observed to you that the sanctions of the Jewish law consisted principally of earthly and temporal rewards and punishments, while those of the gospel have their chief respect to spiritual and eternal blessings. But even under the gospel there are numbers of texts to the same effect as the one just quoted. Listen to some of these. “Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.” “This I say, he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly ; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work, being enriched in every

thing to all bountifulness." And although we must not suppose that heaven can be purchased by our alms-deeds, or that our charities can compound for our sins, yet are there many promises of eternal blessings also connected with the kind regards and liberal relief which his people shew unto the poor for his sake; all however on the supposition that they proceed out of right principles, and are the fruit of faith in Christ and love to God. Listen to some of these. "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and blind: and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good reward against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Thus charity to the

poor is like godliness, (of which indeed, if it be true charity, it is a part, as having its main regard to God,) and has the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. And in all these promises you may most fully trust the truth and fidelity of God; and whether you look at the temporal or the eternal blessing you may assure yourselves that "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the Saints, and do minister."

Thus we have seen the care which God took for the poor and the rich in the land of Canaan; for the poor, that they should never be reduced to abject and hopeless want; and for the rich, that they should acquire heavenly dispositions, escape sin, and receive blessings. And we have seen that the same care is taken under the gospel. And truly under every dispensation of God's government of the world there will always be these inequalities. Even under the laws by which property was held by

the Jews, there would necessarily be much disproportion in different families and individuals, and many would always be found, who through misfortune, mismanagement, or misconduct, would fall into poverty. A perfect equality cannot by any possible arrangement be preserved among men. If it were made on any one given day, alterations would occur on the next: Differences in station and wealth are the necessary attendants on the present condition of human life, and these call forth the exercise of various christian graces in all classes. Rich and poor hence derive special and appropriate duties and obligations, by which each is to serve and glorify God in his own particular state. Men thus become bound to each other by the ties of protection and dependance; and their welfare and happiness are not impaired by these inequalities, while a larger scope is afforded for the exercise of different right sympathies, affections, and actions. Such differences must arise in the natural order of God's providence, and were contemplated by him as occurring

even under that peculiar settlement of property which was made by his own will and law among the Jews ; for he says, in the eleventh verse of this chapter, "The poor shall never cease out of the land." He made at the same time, as we have seen, a provision against it, by inculcating kindness and beneficence on the part of the rich.

Oh ! then let the rich among us manifest a bountiful and cheerful liberality. Let them ever open their hand wide unto their poor brethren, and let not their heart be grieved when they give unto them. Let them be *ready* to distribute, *willing*, nay even *glad*, to communicate. Let them "show mercy with cheerfulness." Let them give, "not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." So shall they obtain the blessings and prayers of the poor ; so shall their gifts be acceptable to God through Christ, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

And let the poor among us be contented with the condition in which it has pleased God to place them, and diligently cultivate

the dispositions and fulfil the duties which belong to it. But above all things let them seek a portion of the unsearchable riches of Christ. These are free for them as for any, and may be possessed by them in the greatest abundance. Let them seek to be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," for God hath chosen many of their class to such wealth and dignity. O my poor brethren, seek spiritual riches for your souls at the hands of him who in these blessings at least is no respecter of persons, and then you will indeed have a goodly heritage.

SERMON XXII.

THE PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES.

DEUT. XVIII. 18,—19.

I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

THERE are many various remarkable types in the Old Testament. Persons, things, and circumstances are continually selected to shew forth the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in his person or offices. God was pleased thus to instruct his ancient church, and to give it some anticipations of a more perfect knowledge, as the morning's

dawn precedes the rising of the sun. That sun has risen upon us. It is our mercy to live under a clearer light, and to enjoy through the gospel a direct revelation of Christ. Many prophetic declarations were also given in the Old Testament scriptures, relating chiefly to the same glorious person, or to some part of his church and kingdom. We have seen most of them fulfilled. We have seen how a suffering and triumphant Messiah are united in the person of Jesus of Nazareth: and in his humiliation and crucifixion, in his resurrection and ascension, in the power of his grace, and the progress of his gospel, we perceive how "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The prophet here spoken of in the text whom the Lord would raise up like unto Moses is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is established by the Apostle Peter in the third chapter of the Acts, where he says, "The Lord shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached to you: whom the heaven must receive until the time of the restitution

of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." This point being thus determined, it may be profitable to us to consider, First, under what circumstances the prophecy was given; Secondly, in what particulars Jesus was like unto Moses; and Thirdly, what duty arises from the fulfilment of the prophecy.

I. We will first consider under what circumstances the prophecy was given. It was spoken at that awful season when the law was delivered to them from Sinai in terrors which appalled their hearts. Then, as we read in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, "They said unto Moses, speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die." God accepted them in this thing, and constituted Moses to go between him and them, and he gave them moreover at the same time the promise which we have

now to consider, and which is for the first time recorded in this chapter, that he would afterwards raise up for them another prophet, who in like manner should be the medium of communication of his word and will to them.

Now this was an act of great mercy on the part of God to the Jews. He would not overwhelm them with the visible display of his own glory, and the terrific appearances which accompany his presence. But what a condescension, what a humiliation of himself was here on the part of the Son of God, who in order that he might come and act as a prophet, and speak to mankind the words of God, laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the worlds were, and from being in the form of God, “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” The eternal mind of Jesus contemplated this humiliation when the prophecy was thus first given to Moses : yea, he had contemplated it before he laid the foundations of the world, and he executed this his eternal purpose when he became

incarnate, was born of the virgin Mary, and dwelt and taught among men. But go further into the humiliation of Christ than this immediate subject calls us to proceed, and consider that being in fashion as a man, he not only humbly and mildly preached the kingdom of God and taught the way of salvation, but he "became obedient to death even the death of the cross." He became not only our prophet and our priest, but our sacrifice also. Oh ! how infinite was the condescension which Jesus manifested, and how deep the humiliation which he had to sustain, when he would take upon himself the office of becoming the teacher and the Saviour of fallen man.

II. We will now consider, in the second place, and more at large, since this is the principal subject of the text, in what particulars Jesus was like unto Moses. We cannot compare the divine nature of Jesus with the human nature of Moses. We can only look at him after he had taken upon him the seed of Abraham, and become flesh and dwelt among us.

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Now Moses was eminent as a law-giver to the people of Israel. He delivered to them all the commandments, precepts, statutes, and ordinances which they were to observe. He gave them the whole both of their moral and ceremonial law, and founded and established their whole polity both civil and religious. Jesus also is a law-giver to his people. And oh! what morality, what purity, what holiness does he command! Read that admirable sermon of his on the mount, for there you will find most of the laws of his kingdom. There you will see the purest and richest benevolence, and the soundest and truest justice inculcated; and there you will learn, what the laws of Jesus alone have taught, what infinitely exalts his commandments above those of every other system of jurisprudence or morals, namely, the love of enemies. This principle was unknown to the world till it was put forth as one of the standing laws of the kingdom of Christ. There it appears, brightly shining in its own heavenly glory, an emanation of the divine being from whom it came, a commandment binding

upon all, but which can be observed and kept by none except by those who have themselves the spirit of Christ and are renewed in the spirit of their minds after his likeness.

Again, Moses was a Deliverer. God made him his instrument for bringing the children of Israel out of their house of bondage in Egypt, notwithstanding all the opposition of its powerful king. But Jesus is a greater Deliverer, freeing men's souls from a far sorer bondage, even the bondage of sin and Satan; redeeming them from the power of death and the grave; bringing them out from under the curse of the law and the wrath of God; and thus rescuing them out of the hand of all their enemies. This is a spiritual deliverance. "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless us by turning every one of us from our iniquities:" he hath indeed "raised up a horn of salvation for us" in the person of this Son of David, one who is mighty, and "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." He redeems the souls of all who are led to believe in him, by the price of his blood, and the power

of his Spirit. By the shedding of his blood he made an atonement for sin, and by the power of his Spirit he convinces, converts, and sanctifies. Oh! it is a merciful as well as a mighty deliverance which the Lord Jesus Christ effects for all his believing people, far surpassing the breaking of the bonds of any earthly taskmaster or tyrant. It is the deliverance of their souls from sin and from hell, a perfect recovery out of all the evil and misery of man's original fall from God.

Once more, Moses was, as we have seen already, a Mediator and an intercessor with God for his people. He went near unto God for them, and brought to them the communications of the divine will. He interceded for them in their transgressions, and more than once turned away the wrath of God that he did not utterly destroy them. Jesus is a Mediator, nay he is *the* Mediator and there is no other than he. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." He is also a powerful intercessor for his people. He pleads the

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merit of his own sacrifice and righteousness. Hear his prayers for them as recorded in the word of God. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil." Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Oh! beloved brethren, avail yourselves of the mediation and intercession of Jesus. Go not to his virgin mother, or any of his saints, for they are but mortal and sinful like yourselves and have no power with God, and it is idolatry and blasphemy to supplicate *them*. But go to the Son himself, the eternal God, and keep yourselves from idols. He alone is the way to God's mercy and salvation: no man cometh unto the Father, but by him.

Moreover, Moses was a judge. He "sat to judge the people, and the people stood by

Moses from the morning unto the evening.”
“When they had a matter they came unto him, and he judged between one and another.” And when he had established other judges, for he was not able to bear the whole burden alone, still “every great matter they brought to him, but every small matter” was judged by them. Thus Jesus will be a judge, the judge of quick and dead. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by him. “We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” “The Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all nations.” Oh! let every one who now hears me prepare for that day. Seek ye an interest in Christ by faith. Gain now a part and portion in him who is your Mediator, Intercessor, and Deliverer, that you may be owned by him as his when he shall come to be your Judge. Oh! that by seeking you may receive such pardon through his sacrifice, such justification through his righteousness, such holiness through his Spirit, that you may be found worthy to stand before the Son of man, and to enter with him into his glory.

But it is necessary for us to trace this similarity between Moses and Christ in their character as Prophets, since this is the point more especially referred to in the text. In this character each received his instructions directly from God. Moses was admitted into the presence of God on Mount Sinai, where God spake to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. "My servant Moses," the Lord says, "is faithful in all my house; with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." But in the beginning Jesus was "with God and was God." He says of himself, "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of the Father." "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." The only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him, and made known to the world his various perfections; and the method of salvation. Thus both Moses and Christ had immediate communication with heaven, and received all that they made known to

men directly from God himself. Again, they both taught the same great principles of religion. Each inculcated love as the first duty of man. 'The love of God was the first and great commandment of the law of Moses, and the love of man was the second; and these principles were enforced by Jesus to their fullest extent, and the second carried out even to the love of enemies. Both also taught the need of sacrifice for the expiation of sin. This was the principal object of the ceremonial law which Moses delivered, and the blood of lambs and other animals was continually streaming, and their bodies burning, in atonement for transgression. Jesus taught the same doctrine, with this remarkable difference, that he spake of one sacrifice only, offered up once for all, the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, that great atonement for the sins of men. He exhibits himself as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And the body of his flesh through death is the perfect reconciliation to God of all who believe in him. Thus each of these prophets laid down the first

great principle of true spiritual religion, love, and each introduced a system of salvation adapted to the necessities of man as a sinner, the former in type and shadow, the latter in perfection and reality. Once more, each was, what is more commonly considered as the peculiar office of a prophet, a revealer of events wrapped up from man in the dark mantle of futurity, and known only to God. We find the circumstances of the twelve tribes, the changes of various nations of the earth, and the great fluctuations of the whole Jewish nation accurately predicted by Moses. Especially their captivity in Babylon, the last siege of Jerusalem, and their present dispersion among all nations, bear ample testimony to the inspiration of Moses and the divine character of his writings. Jesus also revealed future events. He warned his disciples of the horrors that were then fast approaching on their land; he made clearly known the certainty and awful solemnities of the future day of judgment, as one who perfectly knew what they would be; he foretold his own death and

resurrection, the sufferings of his early followers, and the final triumphs of his gospel; and manifested that as he himself is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," so the eternity that was past was all known to him, and the eternity that was to come was all present to his view. Again, Moses and Jesus both confirmed their respective missions by striking miracles. Witness on the part of Moses, the miracles wrought by his rod in the presence of Pharaoh, the destruction of the first-born throughout all the land of Egypt, the dividing of the waves of the Red Sea, the Manna brought down from heaven, the water gushing from the rock, the earth opening her mouth to swallow up Korah and his company. Others need not be added. Witness on the part of Jesus the water turned into wine and the loaves of bread multiplied, the blind restored to sight, the dumb to speech, the deaf to hearing, the lame to vigour and strength, the dead raised to life, the devils cast out, the storm hushed into a calm, and the waves of the sea made a firm foundation for his feet. These miracles

testify of both that they were truly prophets of the Lord, and give the broad seal of heaven's truth to all that they delivered. Hence, finally, both spake with authority. Moses well knew from whom he had his commission, and he continually prefaced his declarations to the Israelites with, "Thus saith the Lord." He gave the people proof enough, on more than one occasion, that the Lord had sent him to speak the words which he uttered, and to establish the laws which he enacted. 'The Lord Jesus in like manner spoke with power. We read this of him, that the people "were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." Some of the people when they heard him said, "of a truth this is the prophet," meaning the prophet spoken of in our text, others said, "This is the Christ." He spake to them indeed things of the kingdom of God as if he were what he was, the head of that kingdom. He told them authoritatively that he was from above, that he proceeded forth and came from God, and that the words which

he spake were the words of God. In working miracles he spake in his own name, and by his own authority. He said to the dead, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." He said to the sick of the palsy, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," thereby assuming the prerogative of God. When an unclean spirit gave testimony to him "I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God," he would not receive such witness, but he "rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him;" and the devil obeyed him. "And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves saying, What a word is this; for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." He distinctly asserted his divine authority when he said. "The Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath-day," and yet more when he said, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." His whole style of teaching was in conformity with the character which he claimed. He ever spake to them as one directly sent to

them of God, and as God himself. He commanded them to receive his word as the word of God, and told them that heaven and earth should pass away, but his word should not pass away.

Thus we have traced various particulars in which the prophecy of the text was fulfilled in Christ. But if he was like unto Moses in these things, oh ! how infinitely greater than Moses, and than all the prophets, was he in other things. We have not time to dwell on that subject here, as we must proceed, by way of application, to the third thing noticed in the text, namely, the duty which arises from the fulfilment of this prophecy. The words are these, "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." My brethren, we have the words of God spoken to us by the Son of God. Now if, notwithstanding the importance of the words themselves, and the dignity of him by whom they were spoken, they be rejected by us, or treated with negligent contempt, what shall we justly deserve ?

Surely God requires of us that we receive his words with attention, meekness, faith, and obedience? May he not require an answer from us to justify our neglect of his gospel, if we can find one? May he not require a tremendous punishment if we show such contempt to himself and his Son. We see from the Acts of the Apostles, where this passage is quoted, what God will require. The meaning is there given in these words, "It shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Oh! hear what the Apostle says to the Hebrews on this subject, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at

the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" My brethren, that is the word of God himself. I will not weaken it by a further word of mine. May you receive it, and every saying of Christ, "not as the word of man but as it is indeed the word of God," which also "effectually worketh in all who believe."

SERMON XXIII.

PREDICTION OF FUTURE JUDGMENTS.

DEUT. XXVIII. 65.

And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest ; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.

THE writings of Moses are full of interest. We read in them the history of the origin of the world. We read of the men and the manners that existed before the flood. We read the account of that terrible catastrophe, of which such visible marks are still seen in all parts of the earth. We read of God's selection of one peculiar people, and of his remarkable dealings with them from the call of Abraham till he had brought them to the very borders of the land which he had promised to give them. We read of the

holy laws which he gave them by immediate communication from himself to his servant Moses, and of all the preparatory provision for the introduction of the Gospel by sacrifices and ordinances, through which future ages were to be led to the sacrifice and salvation of Jesus. We read of wonderful and miraculous providences which accompanied the progress of that people towards their settlement in Canaan, of extraordinary promises of prosperity almost beyond belief so long as they should continue steadfast in the worship and services of Jehovah, and threatenings of miseries beyond all former, nay also all future example, if they should depart from him, and reject his word.

The punishment of their defection is set before us in this part of the book of Deuteronomy in terror-striking language, and by many and various images. In a former exposition, from the eleventh chapter, I endeavoured to set before you the blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience which were solemnly pronounced by the priests in the hearing of all the people, and I then

quoted largely from this present chapter. But forasmuch as the subject is of vast importance, and as these threatened judgments are even still being fulfilled, and the Jews of this day are a living proof of the truth of these ancient scriptures, I again take up the subject, and intreat your serious regard to it, especially under the influence of the spirit's application of it by the mouth of the Apostle Paul, "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

In considering this subject, brethren, I shall pass over the many times in which God sold them into the hands of the Philistines and other nations, and their lengthened captivity in Babylon, with the carrying away of the ten tribes into Assyria, and the various deliverances and returns to their own land which God was pleased to give them when they repented and cried unto him: and I shall confine my observations to that last and final infliction of God's wrath upon them, under the effects of which they are still suffering in the present day. The Scriptures

and the providence of God hold them up as a beacon to warn us from their sin and unbelief. May the spirit of God impress it upon this christian nation, and you christian individuals, that we fall not into the same condemnation through the same unbelief.

In the beginning of the time of which I am to speak, the Jewish dispensation was drawing to its close. Alas, the nation had been long filling up the measure of their iniquities. They had become blinded in mind and hard in heart. Few of them had any right perception of the meaning of their own scriptures; and almost all were in deplorable error respecting the nature of the person and kingdom of the Messiah whom they were expecting to come. They had never indeed, after their restoration from Babylon, relapsed into actual Idolatry, but they were sunk in a dead, formal worship. Many of them were hypocritical pretenders to superior sanctity, and others were worldly-minded sensual livers, who expressly denied a resurrection. The nation was in this state when Jesus came to them. We

know how they rejected him. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." They would not receive his gospel. They would not believe in his name. They would not have him to reign over them. They shouted, "away with him, away with him." They suborned false witnesses against him. They dragged him before the Roman Governor. They procured his condemnation by clamour and intimidation. They took and crucified him. Then the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost. In a short time after his crucifixion the Romans came and destroyed their city, and took away their name as a nation. They became scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. They are so unto this day. They are found in all parts of the world. They are mingled among all nations and yet they are distinct from all. They have no where national power. They have no where a national religion. They are without a King, without a temple, without a sacrifice, without a High-Priest, without national or religious distinctions or privileges of any kind. And

yet, as I have said, they exist, and have existed through eighteen hundred years, as a marked and separate people, adhering to Judaism, adhering to their hatred of Christ, and their opposition to his faith, while all other people, in any thing like similar circumstances, have been amalgamated with the nations by whom they have been invaded and conquered, or to whom they have migrated or been carried captive. Now hear the predictions of Moses respecting this dispersion in the verse preceding the text, "The Lord shall scatter thee among all the people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other." Is not this precisely their present state? Has it not been so for many ages? Is not this special mark of this prophet of God upon them? Among all nations, from one end of the earth even unto the other, they have been exiles and wanderers, and such they remain unto this day. And in what estimation, we may ask, have they been held? Have they been considered as the once-honoured servants of God, the depositaries of his word, and receivers of his

law? Have they been regarded, even among Christians, as the descendants of the holy patriarchs and as the progenitors, according to the flesh, of Christ himself, who is "over all, God blessed for evermore?" Ah! No. They have been universally held in abhorrence and contempt. Their names have been cast out as evil. The finger of scorn has ever been pointed at them, and they have been deprived even of the common sympathies of humanity. The most incredible fabrications have been invented and believed respecting them, and they have indeed been looked upon as the filth and offscouring of all things. Now what did Moses say on this particular? Hear the thirty-seventh verse. "And thou shalt become an astonishment a proverb and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." What an accurate description is here! And oh! what an exact fulfilment of it do we now behold. Similar is the prophetic declaration of Jeremiah, "I will deliver them" (that is the King the princes and people of the Jews) "to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for

their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.”—But again, even under contempt and execration, might they not live securely, in personal peace and comfort? They have not been permitted to do so. They have seldom had a safe place of residence long in any land. The persecutions with which they have been afflicted have been dreadful. The pillaging and exactions to which they have been most cruelly and unjustly subjected have been frequent and severe. They have been driven out of various countries at almost a moment’s warning, and have commonly dragged on a precarious existence in constant alarm of banishments, confiscations, prisons, and death. The marks of this long condition of alarm and anxiety are traced on their very countenances, and we may almost apply the poet’s words to the Jewish people, and say, that melancholy has marked them for her own. Now what says Moses on this head also? We read of this in the text. “And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole

of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind." Is it possible that any thing can be more descriptive of that condition in which the Jews have generally existed in all nations." We may indeed bless God that through the prevalence of a better kind of Christianity in these later times their condition has been much ameliorated; but even unto this very day there is no class of men of any kind, who are hated and despised and maltreated as they are by such numbers of persons in all countries.

My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Scorn is not a christian feeling. Hatred of any, is the furthest possible from the genius of the gospel. Persecution has no countenance from the law of Christ. We ought to pity these poor degraded sons of Israel. We should try to give them encouragement and confidence in our christian love. We should pray for them that their condition may be changed, that they themselves may be changed, that the veil of ignorance of

Christ may be removed from the eyes of their mind, and unbelief of his divine office and hatred of his name be taken out of their heart. And surely we should endeavour to aid, as we can, that mission which ministers and members of our own church have undertaken for promoting Christianity among them. Oh ! it is a divine principle by which such persons are actuated. It is a part of the love of Christ when they go forth endeavouring to recover their elder brethren out of the low abyss into which they are fallen. No souls upon earth have greater need of a christian mission to them than they, and none have so many claims upon it. They through whom we have received all our spiritual privileges, they who were the first preachers of the gospel to us, are now not only like the heathen in a state of ignorance and consequent unbelief, but worse than the heathen, they are in a state of opposition and hatred to Christ. They have therefore more claims upon us than any other person can possibly have, and they have more need of christian commiseration,

christian prayer, and christian help, than any who can be presented to us. Oh! how lamentable is the present condition of the Jewish nation, scattered and peeled, despised and persecuted, injured and oppressed, insulted and degraded, opposed to Jesus, and cast off by God.

But shall it be always thus? "Have they stumbled that they shall fall," finally, and irrecoverably? "Hath God cast away his people" for ever? broken every branch of his olive tree, and plucked up its very roots? Not so, believe me. Not so, believe the word of God. Not so, believe the testimony of Moses himself, who uttered these awful predictions. Go to the beginning of the thirtieth chapter of this book. There we read, "It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I commanded thee this day, thou and thy children

with all thy heart and with all thy soul ; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it ; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul that thou mayest live." To this same purpose speaks all the goodly fellowship of the prophets. Hear, first, Isaiah, in his eleventh chapter and eleventh verse, " It shall come to pass that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from

Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Hear secondly, the prophet Jeremiah, in his thirtieth chapter and at the third verse. "For, lo, the days come saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." And "they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up to them." And who is that, we may ask, but the son of David the Lord Jesus? Hear, thirdly, the prophet Ezekiel, in the thirty-sixth chapter and twenty-fourth verse, "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new

spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people and I will be your God."

Now, fourthly, let us hear the prophet Hosea in his third chapter and fourth verse, "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." There again is a clear prediction of their desolate condition, the very state in which they have been for many days, and there also is foretold their return to God and his fear, and their search after the spiritual David, the holy offspring of their renowned King. Next, as the fifth witness, let us hear the prophet Zachariah,

in his twelfth chapter and tenth verse, "I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." This gives a fuller account of their conversion to Jesus, and of their deep repentance for their rejection of him. For who is he on whom they shall look but he whose hands and whose feet they had pierced, when they nailed them to the cross, and to whom the Apostle John expressly applies this passage. Oh! yes, the nation of the Jews shall look upon Jesus, they shall receive his faith, and shall acknowledge that he is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of them and of the world. Finally, let us hear the Apostle Paul, for he also speaks on this subject. Hear what he says in different parts of his eleventh chapter to the Romans. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, but have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Thus we see that the unbelief of the Jews led to the merciful calling in of the Gentiles, and that the mercy shown to the Gentiles shall be reflected back again to the Jews, and so mercy will be extended unto all, both Jews and Gentiles. And oh! how great will be the manifestations of God's grace and glory in that day, as the Apostle had said in some verses preceding, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" "If the casting away

of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead." Thus we perceive that God hath yet mercy in store for his ancient, much honoured, highly favoured, and still preserved, people. And surely we may hope that the time for the pouring out of that mercy upon them may not be distant, in consequence of the great sympathy and interest which have been excited in the breasts of christian people of late years, even as the Psalmist hath sung in the hundred and second psalm, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof:" or, as we have it in the older version in the prayer book, "And why? Thy servants think upon her stones, and it pitieth them to see her in the dust."

What a testimony we have here, my brethren, to the truth of the holy Scriptures! Who but the eternal God could have caused such predictions to be written so many ages

before? And who but he could have so surely brought them to pass? The Jews are at this very moment a living attestation to the truth of the divine word, and they will hereafter bring a yet more powerful testimony to it. Their conversion to the Christian faith and re-establishment in their own land will afford such a demonstration of the truth of the gospel as none shall be able to resist, but those who would not believe even if one should rise from the dead before their eyes, or God should speak to them with his own voice from heaven.

How great is the Lord's indignation against sin! Oh! my beloved hearers, if God did thus to his people of old, a people so honoured and so cherished, because they cast off his law and departed from his worship, and finally rejected his gospel, what past or present mercies or privileges shall secure you from the same, or a greater condemnation, if you in like manner are disobedient to his word, and receive not his Son? "If he spared not the natural

branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

Notice how evidently the Lord is the governor of all the earth. Through all the revolutions of various nations and dynasties, he has been accomplishing his will and his prophecies respecting the Jews. His providence has so ordered all events, and his power has so influenced all minds, as that his people have been in all places and through all ages just what he foretold they should be. Kings and people have done his will and served his pleasure. Kings and people have scorned and persecuted them, but have never been able to destroy them, or to assimilate them to their own religion or manners. Kings and people shall assist to restore them, and join together to do them honour.

Notice, finally, my beloved brethren, the exceeding efficacy of the blood of Christ. It can expiate the sin and cleanse the guilt of even these. It did so with several individuals of his immediate murderers. It does so still in the case of numbers who from time to time are turning to the Lord. It will do

so eventually in the whole of their nation, according to the prophecies quoted. Oh ! beloved brethren, it can also expiate the sin and cleanse the guilt of you and me. And it will do so, if with a penitent heart and lively faith we come unto him who shed it for us. Yes, they, and we, and all, may have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

SERMON XXIV.

GOD'S FAVOUR TO HIS PEOPLE.

DEUT. XXXII. 9.

The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

WE are fast approaching to the close of the life and writings of Moses. The sun of this eminent leader of the Israelites is now descending to the horizon, and it sets in a splendid scene of beauty and glory. No portion of all the word which he delivered to his people is gilded with a brighter hue than this song which we are now about to consider. In the sublimity of its conceptions, the beauty of its imagery, the sweetness of its numbers, and above all, in the fervour of its piety, it is as distinguished among all other ancient poetry, as the Israelites were among the nations of the earth. It breathes a portion of the divinity which inspired it, and very

cold must that heart be, which even at this distance of time does not feel itself warmed by it, and lifted up towards heaven, as on the wings of that noble bird, the sovereign of the tenants of the air, who in an early part of it, is made so beautifully emblematical of the love, care, and protection of God for his people.

There is one leading point in the song; that is, the Lord's favour to his people. Yet this is set before us in a rich variety of the strongest and most interesting lights. Not that every part of it can be made minutely and directly applicable to the case of the general church of God, for some things are necessarily confined to the peculiar circumstances of Israel; but the Lord God here speaking as a man, and representing heavenly things by earthly, thus impresses upon our minds the vast extent and minute observation of his love and care, and demeans himself, if I may so speak, by the use of earthly images, to impress us with a deeper sense of them. I do not intend to expound to you all the particular parts of this song.

And at present I take only the verse which I have read to you as a text, with a few that follow it ; for I think that in opening out the exposition of this part I shall be able to give you such a key to the whole as will enable you to unlock for yourselves every other drawer of this precious casket, and enable you to contemplate at your leisure the various treasures, beauties, and wonders which it contains. Moses enters on it by this beautiful introduction, " Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak ; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass : because I will publish the name of the Lord : ascribe ye greatness unto our God." He then proceeds to celebrate some of the greatest attributes of God, reproves the people for their ingratitude and the manner in which they had corrupted themselves, and reminds them of the grace which God had shown to them in the days of old, and through a long succession of their fathers. And thus he

comes to the part which I now propose more fully to expound to you.

I. In the text we have a most impressive simile of the regard and affection which God has for his people. No part of property is ever looked upon with more favour than that which has been inherited, and come down to us from father to son, through many generations : none is preserved with more care, or parted with more painfully. This is a feeling which seems natural to man. Families and individuals still, in all civilized countries, cherish their patrimonial inheritances with the same affection. Now this is the simile which the Lord uses in the text, to express the regard which he had for the children of Israel. “ The Lord’s portion is his people ; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” It speaks of them as his possession. It marks his long-seated love to them, his anxiety to keep them as his own, his unwillingness that they should by any means be alienated from him : nay it denotes the almost impossibility of such a circumstance. As each of the tribes had its own particular lot, portioned

out for it, in which it should perpetually reside, and as each individual of that tribe had also his fixed inheritance which he might not dispose of to another, except at least for a short season, so the Lord himself also had them as his portion, his lot, and his inheritance. Consequently he would not know how to part with them. He could not find in his heart—we speak after the manner of men,—to sell or give them up to another.

Now the Lord *was* thus with Israel as a nation. He loved them and cherished them, as a man does his house and home, as a father his son, as a husband his wife. He long resided among them by his providence, his word, and his Spirit. He cultivated them as his vineyard, adorned them as his garden, and delighted in them to do them good, to bless, preserve and keep them: they were “a peculiar treasure unto him above all people.” He represents himself as lamenting over their defections, and not knowing how to punish them. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah?” “My heart,” he

says, “is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee.” Thus unwilling does he represent himself to cast off his people. And though after long warnings and chastenings they nevertheless filled up the measure of their iniquities by the crucifixion of his Son, and he was obliged to reject them, yet will he repurchase them. They are still his inheritance, and his people. He will yet redeem them by their nearest of kin. He will yet send out to them a deliverer from Zion. He will recover them again, and again dwell in the midst of them.

Thus also are God’s spiritual people his portion, and the lot of his inheritance, even those who are brought into a new covenant relation with him through faith in his Son. They are beloved for Jesus’ sake, and they are delighted in as the purchase of his death, and the new creation of his grace. The Church of Christ is now the spiritual lot in which God resides. It is his temple, his

vineyard, his flock, his chosen nation, his peculiar people. But how can these be called the lot of *his inheritance*? By whom have they been assigned to him as such? From whom did the patrimony descend? If we consider God as the infinite, eternal, self-existent Father, the maker of all things, and the Lord of the whole earth, then the simile will altogether fail in this point. But if we consider the Lord as the Lord Jesus, then it holds in all its force. For he is the everlasting Son, to whom the Father gave the tribes of Israel for a portion, and this being a light thing, he gave him also "the heathen for his inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession." And where any individuals are given to him by the Father's everlasting love, and called and brought to him by effectual grace, these also are his portion, he takes possession of them, and displays in them "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints." In the heart of the humble believer he resides as in his patrimonial inheritance; there he keeps his court, and there their affections wait on him as the

vassals of his crown, and their bodies serve him as the subjects of his kingdom. And never was country more prized, or home better loved, than his people are prized and loved and honoured and blessed by the divine Jesus.

II. In the verse which follows the text these marks of the Lord's favour are traced up to their origin, and described by another striking simile. "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." God's favour to his people originates in his own boundless grace and mercy. It is not given to them because they are rich and powerful and in a prosperous condition. It finds them when in a low and dangerous state, and comes to them as a relief when miserable and ready to perish. He acts thus for the display of his own perfections of grace and mercy, and for the honour of his own great name.

Thus it was shown to Israel. The Lord called their father Abraham, when he was an idolater in the land of Ur in the Chaldees; he looked towards the nation when it

was in bondage in Egypt; and in the wilderness he entered into covenant with them and gave them his holy law. The circumstances of this waste howling wilderness are more fully described in the eighth chapter and fifteenth verse, where Moses says, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water: And again in Jeremiah the second chapter and sixth verse, when he complains that they said not, "Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." Through this the Lord led them with care, provided them with daily food, suffered not their raiment to wax old, conducted them by the right way, instructed them fully in his laws and ordinances, showed them the greatness of his name, the harmony of his attributes, the

way of propitiation by sacrifice, and the method of purification, in shadows and types indeed, but yet as no other nation was favoured. He kept them also as the apple of his eye. What a striking simile of the Lord's watchful care and protection! No part of the human frame is guarded with more precaution than that tender organ. The pupil of it, formed throughout in the most curious manner, and thoroughly adapted for receiving on it the impressions of visible objects and communicating them to the brain, is fenced with brows and lashes to preserve it from too much light and heat. An exquisite sensibility is placed in the lids, which seem to take instant alarm at the slightest approach of danger, and to close for its protection! It is to the care thus manifested for the safety of the pupil of the eye that the Lord compares his care over Israel. Is it possible that any expression could give us a more beautiful or forcible representation? The figure is used by David in prayer in the seventeenth Psalm, "Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide

me under the shadow of thy wings." The prophet Zachariah also shews by the same figure the minute manner with which God identifies himself with his people, and how he resents any injury done to them as if done unto himself, for he says in the second chapter and eighth verse, "He that touches you touches the apple of his eye." I say *his people*, and I mean his *spiritual* people, his true worshippers and servants under his gospel, those who are followers of his Son Jesus. The promises and privileges, the instruction protection and care of Israel, all belong to them also, and are even of a higher nature. Christian Brethren, if the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish law were types of your better sacrifice in Christ, so was all that God wrought in their favour typical of the favour which he has towards you. All that he did for them in temporal things will be done for you in spiritual blessings. You also he found in a waste howling wilderness, lying dead in trespasses and sins. You are saved by grace. And being so saved, he will guard and guide you, he will

teach and instruct you, he will keep you even still as the apple of his eye, from every harm and danger, yea from every evil work unto his heavenly kingdom. These are your present privileges and prospects, O ye spiritual Israel, ye people saved by the Lord.

III. The tender, continual, and watchful care of God is exhibited by a third simile in the next verse which I will now proceed to consider. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him." These habits of the eagle are known to naturalists. In teaching her young to fly the parent bird shakes up the nest to make them leave it, she flutters with her wings to encourage them to take flight, and spreads them abroad to show them how to use them, and if in their first attempts there is danger of their falling, she darts under them with the rapidity of lightning, takes them on her back, and bears them again to the nest in safety. This simile, so

natural and appropriate, is also chosen to represent the care of God over his children. Thus he stimulates, teaches, and saves: thus is he a very present help to them in every time of need. In the work of their salvation there is none but he: no strange God divides the labour or shares the glory. "I, even I," he saith, "am the Lord, and beside me there is no saviour." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

The Lord appeals to the Israelites, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." So again in Deuteronomy, "And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bare his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." Thus also the prophet Isaiah calls to the people and encourages them in his day, "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne

by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he: even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you." The figure is most interesting and affecting, whether it be taken from the parent bird, or the human creature. As these bear and carry their tender offspring, so the Lord had supported and upheld the Israelites through the various periods of their national existence.

It is thus also with the believing people of Jesus. He too represents himself as a good shepherd, leading his flock, and bearing the last sheep back on his shoulders. And as the eagle in this simile, he excites desires and hopes in the people of his choice; encourages them in their young and feeble attempts; sets before them his own example for he took their nature; and hastens to save them in all their dangers. Oh! that we may ever be most thankful for his love and care, and that we may be trained up by him for higher and higher flights into the regions of heavenly places. It is said that the eagle can

look on the dazzling splendour of the sun when he shineth in his strength. May we be enabled by faith to look upwards to the things of glory, and hereafter have power and privilege to behold the unclouded brightness of the face of God. Oh! that we may mount in spirit, on the wings of faith and prayer and thanksgiving, into the highest heaven of spiritual things, till we are borne to the very throne of God, and there have our portion and the lot of our inheritance for ever. Yet I know not whether that other simile which Christ uses in the gospel, is not as touching to the heart, and as expressive of tender and anxious care as the one now before us. It is the simile of the parent hen. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," saith the Lord, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." However unacquainted you may be with the habits of the eagle, this care of the domestic fowl you have often seen. If her young brood need warmth and

shelter, if a thunder storm approacheth, or a bird of prey hovers near, with what anxiety does she call them together, and shelter them under her own body. Oh ! may the wings of Almighty mercy thus shadow us. May we ever run to them for refuge ; and may the promise be fulfilled to us in its spiritual import, “ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust : his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

My brethren, let me now, in application, beseech you all to seek this favour of the Lord. It is the greatest good that you can possibly possess. It comprises in itself every good of every kind, temporal and eternal, earthly and heavenly. Perhaps you think much of the favour of the world. What can all the world do for you in comparison of what God can do ? Can its princes so honour and ennoble you ? Can its nobles so patronize you ? Can its wealthy men so enrich you ? Can its men of pleasure so delight you ? It is a shame even to hint at a comparison. Remember the declaration of Solomon, who had well experienced all that

the world can do to satisfy its votaries. "Vanity of vanities," said he, "all is vanity." Remember one thing more. In seeking inordinately the favour of the world, you will lose the favour of God. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." On the other hand, there is no man who hath lost any thing of earth by seeking the favour of God, who will not find it amply made up to him even in this world; and infinitely more in the next. I plead with you on your own interest. Omitting at this time all arguments and persuasions drawn from higher motives, I put it as a matter of profit and loss. So does the scripture. "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!" You will

lose your soul, if you gain not the favour of God. You will lose all that protection and care which he affords his people in life, all that peace of conscience, all that happy confidence, all that heavenly hope, and all those spiritual joys, which a sense of his favour gives to the soul even while it sojourns in the body. You will lose all that is worth living for in life, and all that constitutes the glory and happiness of heaven. Be wise then and consult your own interest by earnestly seeking the favour of God, for you will gain, with the possession of *it*, all that you will lose if you gain it not.

You know how it is to be obtained. You know that Jesus is the way to it, and that those who live by the faith of him, never fail of obtaining it. Be then likeminded with the Apostle Paul, and whatever other things may be thought gain, count them "loss for Christ," yea be willing to "suffer the loss of all things and count them but dung, that you may win Christ and be found in him."

SERMON XXV:

THE MAJESTY AND GLORY OF GOD.

DEUT. XXXIII. 26—29.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms : and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone : the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine ; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy are thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ? and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

IN our last sermon we had a most magnificent and interesting display of the privileges

and blessings of the Lord's people. This text opens with a celebration of the majesty and glory of God himself. The language rises with the subject, and scarcely anything can be conceived beyond the sublimity of these verses. Great was the honour and happiness of Israel, and Moses described that honour and happiness in lofty tunes, but his mind is raised up to a higher flight when he speaks of Israel's God. Now, like the eagle from which he had before drawn one of his noble similes, he soars into the regions of etherial light, and seems to behold, with naked eyes, the brightness and majesty of God in his power and glory. May that holy Spirit which inspired him to utter these exalted strains enable me to expound and you to understand and profit by them.

Moses had been pronouncing blessings upon the different tribes of Israel separately, which were also prophecies of their future character and condition. In conclusion he joins them all together, and thus breaks out in admiration of their covenant God.

“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.” No surely. Which of the false gods of the heathen ever was invested with such power and majesty as Jehovah? which of them was ever supposed to possess such holy attributes? Which of the nations ever worshipped such a God as he who was the God of Israel? or ever dreamt of attributing such perfections as his to those figments of their own depraved imaginations? “Who is like unto thee, O Lord God, among the Gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works.” Who like him could have brought out his people, with such a mighty display of power, in opposition to all the force of Pharaoh and his armies? Who could have led them by a fiery pillar? Who have divided the red sea and made its waters to stand on a heap for them? Who could have rained down manna from heaven upon them, and brought them water out of the flinty rock? Or who could have so taught

them, or given them a law so pure and holy, so spiritual in its worship of him, so admirable in its morality towards one another? or who could have established that law on the sanction of such wonderful rewards and punishments? and who could have looked forward through such a length of years, and delivered prophecies so definite, and so accurately fulfilled as those which he made known to that people? No surely. There was none like unto the God of Jeshurun, and there is none like unto the God of the believing Christian; none that could have given such a gospel, none who could have bestowed so precious a gift on rebels and enemies as that of his only begotten Son. Where among the gods of the heathen, was one like Jesus? Who like him, ever descended from the highest heavens, sojourned so long, in such a condition of life, among men, and above all, for such a purpose? What god of idolaters ever took the form of man that he might die to save the world? Whenever any of the great gods of the heathen were feigned to come upon earth, for very different

purposes indeed did they come. Oh ! brethren, what surpassing power, wisdom, mercy, and love, appeared in this wonderful manner of effecting man's redemption ! When the eternal God is contemplated in Christ, we then see the incomparable grace and glory of the divine character. We behold compassion without parallel, and love that passeth knowledge. We see mercy and truth meeting together, and righteousness and peace kissing each other. And which of the sons of men was ever like unto the man Christ Jesus ? Where was there ever found in human form and nature such spotless purity, such ardent zeal, such unbounded and diffusive love, such unwearied patience, such gentleness and meekness, such lowly humility ? Or who, like him, can deliver and save ? Who like him can give peace and happiness ? Who can bestow such temporal and spiritual blessings as he ? Well did one of old exclaim, " None but Christ, none but Christ," and while we listen to the song of Moses, " There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun," let our hearts respond,

and our voices resound, there is none like to Jesus, our Saviour, not one that can compare with him.

The prophet proceeds in admiration of the majesty and glory of the Lord, “who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.” You see the kings of the earth riding in their splendid chariots of state; the conquerors of the world proceed with pomp and pageantry in their triumphal cars; the adventurous mariner rides aloft upon the billows of the mighty waters in his noble ship; but the Lord rideth upon the heavens; the clouds are his chariots, and the cherubim and seraphim his attendant followers. “He rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.” Thus is he celebrated in the eighteenth Psalm; and in the hundred and fourth the Psalmist says, “O Lord my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; who layeth the beams of his chambers in

the waters : who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind : who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire." Thus all the elements are used for his pleasure, and brought together to form his triumphal state. How magnificent the description, yet how incapable of affording a full conception of his glory. Thus he proceeds in his excellency displaying all his divine perfections ; and thus he proceeds for the help of his people, to deliver them in danger, to bring instant help in trial, to avenge them on their enemies, to receive their souls to heaven. Cannot he who thus rides upon the heaven become a very present help in every time of need? Cannot he come swift as the lightning's flash to his people's rescue? Cannot he bear them far away beyond the reach of every evil, and place them securely in the realms of perfect peace and uninterrupted joy? Oh! yes, my brethren, the Lord can do all these things, and every thing else which his people may at any time need. And he has promised that he will do thus for

them, and he will be faithful to his promise.

For, I now observe, that this great and mighty God, so incomparable, so infinitely superior to all, is a covenant God, and by his covenant has engaged himself, with all his power and perfections, to the people who have embraced his covenant. These were of old the nation of the Jews: these are now the various members of the Church of Christ in all parts of the earth. I do not mean the whole body of nominal Christians, but I mean those who having been enlightened and converted by his grace do truly love honour and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses here turns and applies himself to his people. Christian believer, I do the same to thee. I say to thee, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.” The eternal God is thy refuge. The word refuge here means properly a habitation or dwelling place, wherein the inmate lives in safety and peace: and

his home to which he returns for quiet and rest from the toilsome business of life, its cares, distractions, and dangers. In the first verse of the ninetieth Psalm we read in the prayer-book version, "Lord, thou hast been our *refuge* from one generation to another." We read the same verse in the translation of the bible, "Lord, thou hast been our *dwelling place* in all generations." From the two we perhaps gain a more correct idea of the meaning of the term than from either alone. It implies a fixed, well-known, abiding place of protection, rest, peace, and happiness. God is this unto his people. In him they find a refuge from all the storms and troubles of life, a rest from their anxieties and earthly cares, a solace in their troubles, and safety in their dangers. This is sweetly expressed in the fifth verse of the twenty-seventh Psalm, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." Yes, believing brother, if the eternal God be thy refuge, and he will be thy

refuge, if thou art in Christ by faith, he will give thee rest, whoever or whatever causeth trouble, and though a host, whether of men or devils, should encamp against thee, thy heart need not fear; though war should rise against thee, in this mayest thou be confident. The security thus enjoyed is powerfully expressed by Moses in the next clause, "underneath are the everlasting arms." Is not this what Jesus says of his people? "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand. I and my father are one." Here then is something of stronger support and surer safety than the eagle's wings under her nestling, than the angels' hands bearing up their charge. Underneath are the everlasting arms. God himself, his omnipotence and eternity are engaged in the upholding and keeping of the Christian believer. With

this support he cannot fall. In this strength he will be strong. By this aid he may run and not be weary, he may walk and not faint. The grace of Christ is sufficient for him, he can do all things through Christ strengthening him. Relying on this support he may confidently pray, "hold thou me up and I shall be safe:" he may joyfully unite in the apostle's ascriptions of honour and praise, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, to God only wise; be glory through Jesus Christ for ever." "Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and for ever, Amen."

The next thing to which Moses refers is the victory which the Lord gives to his people over all their enemies. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them." We have already seen that God had commanded the Israelites

to thrust out and destroy the previous inhabitants of Canaan, and had assured them that none of these should be able to stand before them. He enabled them to conquer and extirpate them, and he established them there in peace, and gave them rest from all their enemies round about. The same promise extends to his people of the present generation and through all ages, to you and me, as well as to those of whom Moses spake. There is our great enemy the Devil. Now the captain of our salvation engaged with him in single combat in the wilderness and signally defeated him. And what does the word of God say about the conflict of the people of Christ with him? It says that God "shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly." It tells us that the devil shall be cast for ever into the lake of hell, and shall tempt and disturb no more. There is another enemy, the world. And what does the word of God say of it? It says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is

the Son of God." 'There is another great enemy, that is, sin. And what does the word of God say of sin? It says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace." And there is the last enemy, Death. And what does the word of God say of death? It says, in the name of Jesus, "O Death, I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction." That glorious conqueror, who himself burst the bands of death asunder, and who leads his followers to certain victory over it, says, "I am the Resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." Are there any other enemies of the believing soul? They shall all be destroyed. Like death, they shall all be swallowed up in victory. The Lord Jesus will make all his people completely victorious, and every enemy he shall destroy. Let them fight manfully under his banner against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and assure themselves of final conquest, and

a glorious deliverance out of the hand of all their enemies.

Moses loves to contemplate and display the mercies of the Lord to his people, and their wondrous privileges. He goes on to say, "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heaven shall drop down dew." The Israelites occupied the land of Canaan. It became wholly theirs. None shared it with them. And God blessed it with fertility beyond all other lands, and gave them abundance of corn and wine, and all the fruits of the earth, under the genial influence of his sun, his rain, and dews. And still the Lord's spiritual people dwell alone. They are separate in principle, heart, and conduct, from a world that lies in wickedness. They have exclusive possession of their spiritual privileges, their pardon of sin, their justification, their peace which passeth all understanding, their joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not. The ungodly have no part or lot with them in these matters. It is not so with the wicked. Hear these

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times of the gospel prophecied of by Jeremiah in language similar to this of Moses, but more distinctly marking the source of safety. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, "The Lord our Righteousness." All these temporal blessings promised to Israel and enjoyed by that nation in their land, are emblematical of the present privileges of safety peace and joy which believers possess in Christ. They "inherit the earth;" "the lines are fallen unto them in a pleasant place, yea, they have a goodly heritage," they have "peace and joy in believing," and they "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Yet in another view they dwell *not* alone; for God dwells with them by his Spirit, and hereafter they shall dwell with him in heaven where they shall enjoy uninterrupted peace, absolute safety, and perfect

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cessation from every fear and pain. “There the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.”

The last words of the text, with which Moses concludes his divine song, declare the happiness of the Lord's people. “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” Is it possible that they can be otherwise than happy who are possessed of the mercies that have been described? Are not they happy who have God for their refuge, and his everlasting arms underneath them? Who have protection and deliverance and victory and safety in him? who have the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, and the whole armour of God prepared for them and put upon them by his grace and favour? Happy indeed are they, and who is like unto them? “Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” “Blessed is the nation, whose

God is the Lord ; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God." Their whole happiness, and all their privileges and blessings, are comprised in this one expression in the text, "who is like unto thee, O people *saved by the Lord?*" Saved by the Lord ! There is the secret of all their happiness. There is its source, there its completion. With their present salvation from sin and condemnation it begins upon earth ; in a sense of the continuance and progress of salvation it is maintained through life ; in an assurance of salvation it triumphs in death ; in the possession of complete salvation it is perfected in heaven. Well may we exclaim, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun ;" there is none "like unto the people who are saved by the Lord."

My great anxiety is to induce you all to seek this God for your portion, and his salvation as the only thing needful for your happiness ; as the one thing which will also effectually secure that happiness both now

and everlastingly. Ah! my brethren, it is of no use for you merely to hear of these great blessings and privileges of the Lord's people, and of these glorious attributes, and mighty works, and wondrous mercies of the Lord himself, except you earnestly desire a part in him, and in all this his grace and goodness. It is little consolation to me to think that I only deliver my own soul by endeavouring to warn, and teach, and guide you. My heart's desire and prayer is that your souls may be saved. I, as it were, "travail in birth" for you that you may be led to God. My prayer is that the Holy Ghost may accompany my words with his own lifegiving grace and energy, and dispose your hearts to receive the truths made known unto you. I tell you continually that the way in which you are now to receive these blessings of God is through a lively faith in his Son Jesus Christ, and that as you are in Christ by faith, you will be the Lord's people in covenant, and that then there is nothing that ever was promised or given to his people of old as a nation but what will be given to you as

individuals after a still better manner, because after a spiritual manner. Oh! my brethren, that you could be persuaded, even all of you, to seek that blessed Saviour with all your heart and soul, in penitence and prayer, and to live in all holy obedience to his gospel. I cannot persuade you. That is the prerogative of God, and the work of the Holy Ghost. But he works by means and instruments, and the preaching of the word of God is the principal of the means which he blesses, and its ministers the instruments whom he chiefly uses. Therefore I preach in hope that the Holy Ghost may work by me. And I now preach to you the mercies and blessings which the word of God sets forth as belonging to all the Lord's people, that you may be gained by them. I set no terrors of the Lord before you. I tell you of his goodness and grace, and the happiness of his people. I had rather you should be drawn by love than driven by fear. But oh! that any means whatever may be blessed to your salvation.

SERMON XXVI.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

DEUT. XXXIV. 4, 5.

And the Lord said unto Moses, this is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed : I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

DEATH is an object at which we should habitually look. All are subjected to it ; and the records of history and the observation of our own eyes present it continually before us. And oh ! of what importance also is death to us ! What a change does it make in our condition ! What events of the utmost interest succeed it. It takes place under a thousand different circumstances. Some

die suddenly, others slowly ; some in the bosom of their families, others far from home, among strangers, or even without a single person to close their eyes. Some are buried with magnificence and pomp ; others are conveyed to their humble graves with the meanest and poorest attendance. But none of *these* things are circumstances of *importance*. Little matters it what becomes of the dead body, as soon as the animating spirit has left it. But oh ! it is of infinite and eternal importance to obtain an entrance into that future world of rest and blessedness. And oh ! it will be a strengthening support and transporting joy to the soul, if we are privileged at death to have a view by faith of that great glory which is possessed by the saints in heaven.

These observations arise from the verses of the text which tell us of the death of Moses, and of the sight which he was permitted to enjoy of the land promised to his people. Many curious enquiries might be discussed as to how the vision of Moses was enlarged, so as to take in the whole, in

what manner his body was buried, and what was the nature and object of the contest between Satan and Michael the Archangel about it. But as I have never entered into disquisitions of this nature throughout the whole of these Expositions, so I prefer now to take only the plain narrative of the sacred writings, and to consider from it, First, some of the circumstances which attended the death of Moses; and Secondly, the view which he was permitted to take of the promised land.

I. In noticing the circumstances which attended the death of Moses, I observe that he died in the land of Moab, and was not permitted to enter into the land of Canaan, according to the word of the Lord. This was a punishment to him for his fault in that memorable day when the people murmured against God for the want of water in the wilderness of Zin. We have already considered this offence in an exposition of the twentieth chapter of Numbers, when we saw that Moses was so provoked by the ingratitude and rebellion of the people, that he forgot

his own meekness of spirit, arrogated too much to himself and Aaron, went beyond the simple letter of the Lord's command, and failed to sanctify himself in the sight of the people. We there also heard the sentence pronounced against both the brothers, that they should not be permitted to enter into Canaan. And we find, from the close of that chapter, that Moses and Aaron "went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son, and Aaron died there in the top of the mount." I therefore need only adduce a few additional circumstances connected with the case of Moses.

In the third chapter of this book we find him earnestly desiring and ardently praying that God would "let him go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon: but the Lord would not grant his request that he might enter in; yet he promised him that he should see it with his eyes. In the fourth chapter we find Moses warning the

Israelites from this very circumstance, and mournfully adducing his own case. "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes," he says, "and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance: but I must die, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over and possess that good land." In consequence we find the Lord saying unto Moses in the thirty-second chapter of this book, "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho: and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people; because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel." O beloved

brethren what a proof is here that God is a jealous God, jealous of his own honour and glory. If such men as Moses and Aaron are thus punished because they forgot to honour him in the sight of their people, how careful should we be to take no honour to ourselves in any thing; but ever to give the Lord the honour which is due unto his name. Let no man glory in himself, or in any thing that he has or does, but he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord. Let no man pay too great a regard to his fellow-men, or be influenced or affected by them. Let us not be provoked by their obstinacy, nor afraid of their fear, but as the prophet Isaiah says whom St. Peter also quotes, "Sanctify the Lord God himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Oh! remember the destruction by fire of the two sons of Aaron for a different act, but a sin of the same nature, and remember what Moses then said unto Aaron, "'This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."

I observe, next, that Moses died in a hale old age, advanced in duration beyond that of his contemporaries, but in the full possession of all his faculties, both of body and mind. We read this in the seventh verse, "Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." He died not of natural decay; he died not of any sickness; he died by the will of the Lord. He went up to the top of Pisgah; he came down it no more. In pursuance of the Lord's sentence, and by his all-powerful execution of it, Moses closed his eyes in death, and no doubt in great peace, after he had looked over the land which was given to his people and anticipated their joyful entrance into it. Yet the manner of his death, I should rather say the cause of it, may well make us all the more afraid of sinning against the Lord, and also of not honouring him amongst our fellow men by showing that he has our supreme regard in every thing, and by ascribing every thing that is good to his power and grace alone.

Sicknesses may be often sent, death itself may be often inflicted for some offences of this nature against God, though the cause of such sicknesses and death may not be made known as in the case of Moses. The Apostle seems to intimate this, when he is writing to the Corinthians respecting their profanations of the Lord's supper, "For this cause," he says, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Oh! who can tell how many of our afflictions and how many deaths might be found to proceed from this cause, if we could read all the book of God's providence in his government of the world, and his dealings with individuals? But however in some way and from some cause all must die. Moses died, and Aaron died, eminent servants of God as both of them were, and greatly as they were distinguished. The life of Moses was a hundred and twenty years, and was divided into three distinct periods. Forty years were spent in the court of Pharaoh, as the adopted son of the princess; forty years he kept sheep with his father-in-law in the

plains of Midian ; and forty years he sustained the high office of deliverer, leader, and law-giver of the people of Israel. Yet Moses died. And kings must die, and peasants must die, and judges and legislators and priests, all must die. But Jesus ever lives. He indeed also “died unto sin once,” but “death had no more dominion over him.” He ever lives to ransom and redeem and deliver and guide and rule and intercede for his people. And oh ! beloved brethren, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

I observe further that Moses not only died by the express will of God, but that God also buried him where he died, unknown to his people, and in a place which they could never discover. We read this in the sixth verse, “And he,” that is, the Lord, “buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor ; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” Up to the time when this concluding chapter was written, of course by some other hand, it might

be by Joshua, or Samuel, or perhaps even by Ezra; up to the time, I say, when this was written, the place where the bones of Moses were laid was unknown; and so it has ever been. And we may reasonably suppose that this was done lest the Israelites then or in after ages, should offer some superstitious and idolatrous worship to him, as they were prone to do. We know that in the days of Hezekiah, seven hundred years after the death of Moses, the children of Israel burnt incense even to the brazen serpent which Moses had made. How much more likely would they have been to worship the bones and other relics of Moses himself, could they have found them, and to surround his grave with an unholy sanctity, which would have been of the same nature as his own offence. And strongly does this reprove that superstitious custom which the Romish Church has so extensively adopted, of canonizing the dead, and worshipping the relics of departed saints, and giving undue and unscriptural honour to their tombs, many of them alas without any

pretensions to the character of saints, and distinguished only by some ascetic and anti-social retirement to a hermitage or convent, or by a furious and bloody zeal to propagate the tenets of that most erroneous and persecuting church.

The history concludes with a striking testimony in honour of 'this distinguished servant of God. It says, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel." No, brethren, up to the time when these last words of the Pentateuch were written, and for many ages afterwards, no prophet was raised up equal to Moses. But, as we saw in expounding a passage in the eighteenth chapter of this book, one not only like to, but far greater than, Moses, has arisen in the dispensation of the gospel, one who had

yet infinitely greater intimacy and union with God, for he was one with the Father, and whose miracles were greatly superior to those wrought by Moses, and especially in these two particulars, that they were wrought by his own authority in his own name, and that they were miracles of mercy and not of judgment. Oh ! what beneficent and gracious as well as mighty, works were those which Jesus “ showed in the sight of all ” the men of his generation, proving indeed that never was there in the earth one like unto him.

And now let us endeavour to set before our own eyes the view which Moses was permitted to take of Canaan. It would be a delightful view to him. He would see what a safe and happy residence God had prepared for them, so soon as the present wicked and idolatrous inhabitants were driven out before them. Surely it is not too much to suppose that by prophetic view he would behold their immensely increased numbers, their wealth and power. Surely he would be ready to exclaim in the language

of Balaam, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valies are they spread forth, as gardens, by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." And again, "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel."

Surely we may also suppose that some such view of *the great blessing* of that land as had been vouchsafed to Abraham was presented to the mind of Moses, and that he too, looking through a long vista of future ages, and seeing the day of Christ, would rejoice therein and be glad. Oh yes, we may well suppose that in this last hour of life God would give unto his dying servant such a view of Jesus, as would fill his soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory, enable him to die in the full assurance of his own personal interest in that glorious Saviour,

and exult in the spiritual blessings brought into Canaan, and through Canaan to the whole world, by the advent of Christ.

What a change has that land experienced! How are its ancient, honoured, and favoured possessors fallen! It is itself smitten with barrenness; and it has cast out its inhabitants as rejected. It groans and grieves, (and oh how long has it groaned and grieved) under the weight of civil slavery, and religious darkness. But, brethren, we may look from the top of the rocks of prophecy and promise, and see it again filled with the seed of Abraham, and the people of Moses. Surely we may look for the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and for their conversion to the faith of Christ. Surely once again Judea and Jerusalem shall be the praise of the whole earth under the spiritual reign of Jesus their king. Oh! it is a happy view of futurity which the believer in the word of God may justly take, when he contemplates the mercies which are yet in store for even this fallen earth, when the fulness of both Jews and Gentiles shall be brought in.

But from the top of the Pisgah of faith there is another prospect, beloved brethren, still more consoling and animating. There is another Canaan over which the dying Christian may cast his eyes with joyful view. There is another rest which remaineth for the people of God, a rest in heaven. There eternal happiness and glory, there perpetual and perfect peace and purity, will be found by the happy believer, who dies in the Lord. There the Canaanite is no more in the land, but love and joy, and heavenly praise, and happy service of God, for ever reign, unmixed and unalloyed with touch or taint of any earthly sinful thing. Oh! surely we may once more take up some other words of Balaam and exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Yes, brethren, if now we be living to Christ, we may joyfully anticipate the happy hour, in which death will be gain, when an entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our God and Saviour, and we shall be for ever with the Lord.

Now here I close the history of the life of Moses, and of these Expository Sermons on the books which bear his name. Very interesting and profitable to myself have been my meditations upon the Lord's dealings with him, and with the extraordinary people whom he led out of Egypt. I trust that, through the blessing of God, these expositions may have helped to increase your knowledge of the divine word, your adoration of that glorious God whose works and attributes have therein been set before you, and your love for that mighty, merciful, and blessed Redeemer, who was so early promised to the world, who so often appeared as the angel of the covenant to several of his chosen people, and who has been manifested to us as the incarnate Word, coming in human form and flesh, to seek and save that which was lost, and to be the Deliverer from sin, Satan, death, and hell, of all who believe in him.

To him we must look through every part of the sacred scriptures. They all testify of him. Moses wrote of Christ, and so did

every other inspired penman. Yes, brethren, we must look beyond Abraham and Moses, and David and the Prophets, and the Evangelists and Apostles ; we must look through types and shadows and ceremonies and ordinances and sacraments, to that one, almighty, all-sufficient Jesus, who is the sum and substance, the life and reality of them all.

Yes, dear brethren, and above all things we must look to his death. That is the great event upon which the whole of our salvation depends. It was by the suffering of death that he bare our punishment and expiated our sins. The offering of his blood was the precious ransom by which he redeemed his people. And oh ! my brethren, think how different were the circumstances of his death unto those under which Moses died. Moses died in peace and without pain ; but Jesus died in excruciating misery. Moses died without any earthly friend near him, yet in the presence of God ; but Jesus died amidst the bitterest revilings and taunts of surrounding enemies, and even compelled

to cry, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” See however the contrast in one great particular. The body of Moses was never found ; but the body of Jesus was raised again from the dead, and shown to be alive by many infallible proofs. Yes, and in that body he ascended into heaven, and there he now sits at the right hand of the majesty on high. And if you believe in him and live to him and die in him, your bodies also shall be raised from the grave, shall be taken up to heaven, shall be fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body, shall be reunited to the immortal soul, and so shall you be ever with the Lord. The Lord grant that such may be the happy termination of all our lives and labours. Amen and Amen.

THE END.

